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“The Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine by Those Diagnosed with Colorectal Cancer”

BACKGROUND: Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths for men and women in Louisiana and the state ranks fifth in death rates for cancer in the United States. Black men have disproportionately higher incidence and mortality rates of colorectal cancer than other populations, stemming from barriers to care. The conventional route of CRC care is surgery and therapies, including immune, radiation, and chemo. Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) refers to any medical treatment and practices that fall outside of conventional medical care. Some CAM modalities can be beneficial for CRC by keeping the body healthy and managing side effects of cancer and treatment. The objective of this study was to explore if and why individuals diagnosed with colorectal cancer have used CAM in the past 12 months.

METHODS: Data on 593,099 people who had ever been diagnosed with colon or rectal cancer were taken from the National Health Interview Survey in 2012. Characteristics of the sample population were examined using frequencies and percentages. Responses to each survey question were analyzed for overall frequencies and cross-tabulated to explore the prevalence of CAM use among those diagnosed with colorectal cancer.

RESULTS: 93% of the sample were above the age of 50, about 90% identified as White and about 8% identified as Black or African American, and about half had a high school degree or less. The South had the largest amount of people ever diagnosed with colorectal cancer. CAM modalities used by the sample were special diets, massage, naturopathy, relaxation techniques, yoga, Tai Chi, herbal supplements, vitamins and/or minerals in the past 12 months. Reasons for CAM use were-for general wellness, to improve immune function, enhance energy or because it was recommended by their healthcare provider or by their family and friends. The CAM that was used by most colorectal cancer patients was vitamins and minerals, followed by herbal supplements and special diets.

DISCUSSION: The use of herbal supplements, vitamins, minerals, and special diet is relatively high for CRC patients in comparison to the other CAM modalities. This could emphasize that patients want to improve their health in whatever way they can, even if not through treating the actual cancer. It is also worth noting that healthcare providers' recommendations of CAM were well received by patients. The ability to in some ways improve their health outcomes and quality of life can aid in some patients gaining a sense of control over their life. CAM provides patients

with the opportunity to stay healthy and treat side effects, while simultaneously finding support and a way to cope with their disease.

Body of Abstract: Left Justified, 11 point Arial font, single spaced.

Special Instructions: The abstract is a summary of the project. Do not to exceed one page. Do not change margins, font style or font sizes on this page. Use this format only- do not modify!!!