



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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Cultural Transformation



# Do Patients Report Greater Improvements in Health When Combining Provider-Delivered and Self-Care Complementary and Integrative Health Therapies?

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# Assessing Pain, Patient-Reported Outcomes, and Complementary and integrative Health (APPROACH)

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**Disclaimer:**

- The views and opinions of authors expressed in this presentation do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Veterans Health Administration or the U.S. Government.
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# The VA HSR&D APPROACH Study

- APPROACH is a pragmatic study in 18 VA medical centers (n=5,600)

**Aim 1:** Compare the effectiveness of using

- practitioner-delivered care + self-care CIH therapies (yoga, meditation/mindfulness, Tai Chi/Qigong)

versus

- practitioner-delivered CIH therapies (acupuncture, chiropractic care, therapeutic massage)

**Aim 2:** Examine the effectiveness of individual CIH therapies

- APPROACH is part of the NIH/DoD/VA Pain Management Collaboratory of 12 studies funded in 2018 for \$160 million to examine non-drug approaches for pain management for military and Veterans.



# Methods

**Data Collected:** March 2022 - March 2023

**Population:** Veterans with moderate-to- severe chronic musculoskeletal pain from 6 VA hospitals who initiated CIH therapies

**Telephone Interviews:** 20 mins, audio-recorded, transcribed

**Analysis:** NVivo 12, deductive-inductive approach coding, reflective approach to thematic analysis refined through discussions/consensus. Both qualitative analysis and quantitative (frequencies).

**Outcomes:** Pain, depression, anxiety, sleep, fatigue, quality of life, and empowerment to take charge of one's health/wellbeing.



# Demographic Characteristics of Patients

Demographic Characteristics	n=125 (%)
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	95 (76%)
Female	30 (24%)
<b>Age</b>	60 mean (30-89 range)
<b>Race</b>	
White	83 (66%)
Black or African American	26 (21%)
Unknown	14 (11%)
Asian	2 ( 2%)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Not Hispanic/Latino	110 (88%)
Hispanic/Latino	10 ( 8%)
Unknown	5 ( 4%)





# Quantitative Summary of Patients' Reports of Effectiveness

Aspect of Health & Direction of Effect		Only practitioner-delivered	Combination p-delivered & self-care	Total Sample
		n=30 (%)	n=30 (%)	n=60 (%)
Pain	Positive effect	26 (87%)	27 (90%)	53 (88%)
	Null effect	2 (7%)	3 (10%)	5 (8%)
	Did not report	2 (7%)	-	2 (3%)
Quality of Life	Positive effect	22 (73%)	27 (90%)	49 (81%)
	Null effect	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	4 (7%)
	Did not report	6 (20%)	1 (3%)	7 (12%)
Self-empwmt.	Positive effect	19 (63%)	23 (77%)	42 (70%)
	Null effect	4 (13%)	3 (10%)	7 (12%)
	Did not report	7 (23%)	4 (13%)	11 (18%)



# Quantitative Summary of Patients' Reports of Effectiveness

Aspect of Health & Direction of Effect		Only Practitioner-delivered	Combination p-delivered & self-care	Total Sample
		n=30 (%)	n=30 (%)	n=60 (%)
Depression	Positive effect	13 (43%)	22 (73%)	35 (58%)
	Null effect	10 (33%)	4 (13%)	14 (23%)
	Did not report	7 (23%)	4 (13%)	11 (18%)
Anxiety	Positive effect	12 (40%)	18 (60%)	30 (50%)
	Null effect	9 (30%)	8 (27%)	17 (28%)
	Did not report	9 (30%)	4 (13%)	13 (22%)
Sleep	Positive effect	18 (60%)	20 (67%)	38 (63%)
	Null effect	11 (37%)	10 (33%)	21 (35%)
	Did not report	1 (3%)	-	1 (2%)
Fatigue	Positive effect	4 (13%)	7 (23%)	11 (18%)
	Null effect	13 (43%)	5 (17%)	18 (30%)
	Did not report	13 (43%)	18 (60%)	31 (52%)



# Results: Combination of Practitioner-Delivered & Self-care CIH Therapies

## Effects on Pain:

90% veterans using both self-care and provider-delivered CIH therapies had positive effects on pain.

Some said the therapies build on each other or sustain pain relief that would otherwise not happen.

*“It has absolutely made a life-changing experience. Before I started doing it, I felt excruciating pain every morning, and that’s all but subsided.... to be able to function and continue on with normal, everyday things that I couldn’t do before.... chiropractic for the physical, and then the yoga also helps with the physical, but I get more mental relief and release from yoga. So, it’s both physical and mental.... I think that’s the way that it’s integrated, that they make the adjustment through chiropractor, but the yoga helps sustain it, and make it stronger.”  
(Veteran using chiropractic & yoga)*





# Results: Combination of Practitioner-Delivered & Self-Care CIH Therapies

## Effects on Quality of Life:

90% of Veterans using both practitioner- delivered and self-care CIH reported positive effects on their overall quality of life.

*“I think for me it's a combination of all of ‘em. It gives me spiritual, mental, and physical health. I'm back in the driver's seat now of my well-being. Before, I lost myself. I lost who I was. I'm a medic by trade, I was always helping others.... once my mission was over it just all caved in on me. And I really lost who I was mentally, physically, and spiritually. And with the combination of all these programs that you guys offer it gave me back my identity and really taught me to believe in myself, that I'm worthy. I'm a good person.... that took a long time and it's a work in progress. But that's what it really gave to me all these programs put together.” (Veteran using acupuncture, Tai Chi, yoga & meditation)*



# Results: Combination of Practitioner-Delivered & Self-care CIH Therapies

## Effects on Self-empowerment:

77% of Veterans using a combination of CIH therapies reported positive effects on their ability to take charge of and manage their own health.

They also reported group therapies gave them more social connections and enriched their lives.

*“I don’t just wanna sit around... I have to do this stuff in order to have any sort of quality of life... I have to just find the right level of activity and right kind of activity to make things work.” (Veteran using acupuncture, chiropractic & meditation)*

*“It’s really nice to be able to be with other Veterans... we try to come together and help each other out and kind of have some fun and just for a moment forget about our pain and stuff.” (Veteran using chiropractic, Tai Chi & meditation)*



## Effects on Depression:

73% using a combination of self-care and provider-delivered CIH therapies reported they lift their mood, even taming their suicidal ideation.

*“I do get depressed... when the chiropractor gets done with me, or I get done with yoga, I can do things... they keep me from being suicidal. I guess, that’s the best thing... They kind of bring me out of my depression enough to where I don’t do anything stupid.”  
(Veteran using acupuncture, chiropractic, yoga & meditation)*



# Results: Combination of Practitioner-Delivered & Self-care CIH Therapies

## **Anxiety (60% reported positive effects, working together to help mood)**

*“I do have anxiety.... As long as I do [yoga], and keep exercising, keep moving, [I] feel better. [I] can stay ahead of that anxiety, so to speak...I think [yoga & acupuncture] work in different ways. I would say that yoga probably is the best because... the movement and that gets [me] moving... yet, the acupuncture, kind of calms [me] down too...And some of that acupuncture too, it helps your mood.” (Veteran using acupuncture & yoga)*

## **Sleep (67% reported positive effects, helping quality of sleep)**

*“I’ll just say I’m relieved. I can focus on what I’m doing at the time, the acupuncture or Tai Chi, or the yoga, and take my mind off of the flashbacks and nightmares which I have.” (Veteran using acupuncture, Tai Chi & yoga)*

## **Fatigue (21% reported positive effects, reducing fatigue during the day)**

*“If I’m doing yoga twice a week and the acupuncture once every three weeks, I don’t get as tired through the day....” (Veteran using acupuncture & Tai Chi)*





# Results: Combination of Practitioner-Delivered & Self-care CIH Therapies

## Sustained effects

*“I really think [chiropractic care & yoga] complement each other, because a lot of the adjustments that I get with chiropractic, the yoga seems to work the same type areas and it... makes the need for an adjustment a lot less frequent. It's almost like they work hand-in-hand, and it's only enhanced my adjustments from the chiropractic care by doing yoga... there's less of a chance of a relapse. I think that's the way that it's integrated, they make the adjustment through chiropractor, but the yoga helps sustain it, and makes [my back] stronger...I don't think I could do one without the other. Without the adjustments in the chiropractor, there's no way I could do some of the stretching and some of the movements that we're doing in yoga.” (Veteran using chiropractic & yoga)*

## Stress

*“So, all serve as their own purpose, but collectively, they just help the body. As far as chiro that unlocks all the stiffness and all that, which ultimately affects blood flow.... that... affects how you move, how you think, how you feel, all of that. Obviously, if the blood is flowing, you're relaxed, there's no stress. Same thing with acupuncture and the Tai Chi.... They all serve a purpose, just in different aspects. And collectively, all are... stress relievers.”(Veteran using chiropractic, acupuncture & Tai Chi)*





## Results: Only Practitioner-Delivered CIH Therapies

**Pain (87% reported positive effects, reporting a reduction in pain and that consistent therapy visits helped keep their pain levels down)**

*“I couldn’t live without the chiropractic care. I don’t want to live without the massage piece, because it’s so much more beneficial, but if I was forced to choose, it would definitely be the chiropractic care.... I can’t even put words to it.... Going on a consistent basis helps keep my pain level down.”*  
(Veteran using chiropractic & massage)

**Quality of Life (73% reported positive effects, compared to 90% using a combo)**

*“...since I've been doing acupuncture, I have less pain, I can move more. I can cope more. I actually can be more—how you want to say—active and moving around, because I now, along with acupuncture, I actually am able to exercise... on a daily basis, whereas before I would have to stop because I would be aggravating the nerve systems or whatever. But with acupuncture, I can actually move.... I have more movement in my joints and everything.”* (Veteran using acupuncture)



## Results: Only Practitioner-Delivered CIH Therapies

### **Self-empowerment (63% reported positive effects, compared to 77% using a combination)**

*“I think that when I was actively doing things to try to better that thing, it gave me kind of this... kind of a purpose... to it. Like, I could affect my own health, rather than just, you know, remember to take pills.” (Veteran using chiropractic )*

### **Depression (43% reported positive effects, compared to 73% using a combination)**

*“When you’re in depression and you’re hurting, you’re in a fetal position, and just wondering what’s going on and why you want to live anymore. And chiropractic can help take a lot of that pain away... because you’re able to get something done during the day, and like I said, act normal, instead of being all hunched up and in pain, and not doing anything but taking aspirin and being in the fetal position. It’s kind of a boon to be able to not have the pain from backache and not have to worry about it.” (Veteran using chiropractic)*



## Results: Only Practitioner-Delivered CIH Therapies

### **Anxiety (40% reported positive effects, better mind set after therapy)**

*“Severe PTSD, 22 combat deployments. I've had friends die, I've watched people die. I've had to kill people. I was a Green Beret. That tension is centered between my shoulder blades up to the top of my head.... If I'm starting to get choked up, if I start thinking... I start locking up... the acupuncture it puts me in a better mindset... relaxation comes, and the chiropractor when they release all that, tension goes away, I don't know why, but my mind automatically starts going towards happier thoughts.”*  
(Veteran using chiropractic & acupuncture)

### **Sleep (60% reported positive effects, helping quality of sleep)**

*“... calming me down helps get me to sleep and ... now I can get up and use the bathroom and go back to sleep and achieve sleep again, so it's helped in that.”* (Veteran using acupuncture)

### **Fatigue (13% reported positive effects, reducing fatigue during the day)**

*“Some of the acupuncture.... I can get a boost of energy to—yeah, it kind of boosts my metabolism. Where I, you know, I don't feel, I guess, sluggish or anything... it's given me a lot of energy. Motivation. It's kind of helped reset my mindset on how I look at things.”* (Veteran using acupuncture)



# Limitations

- Our sample is generalizable only to veterans with chronic musculoskeletal pain. They had to have that to be in the study.
- The veteran population is not generalizable to general population because they tend to have more chronic conditions.



# Conclusions

- When comparing the effects of using combination of practitioner-delivered and self-care CIH therapies vs using only practitioner-delivered CIH therapies we found:
  - Similar percentages of patients reported positive effects for pain (90% & 87%) and sleep (67% & 60%)
  - Greater percentages of patients using a combination of CIH therapies reported positive effects for quality of life (90% vs. 73%), self-empowerment (77% vs. 63%), depression (73% vs. 43%), anxiety (60% vs. 40%), and fatigue (23% vs. 13%) .
- In this presentation we also presented a couple of key quotes from patients using a combination of practitioner-delivered and self-care CIH therapies that illustrated sustained effects of pain relief.





**Thank you**  
**Any questions?**  
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