

JOINT AEROSPACE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION/CIVIL
AVIATION MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
REPORT ON
ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE
April 30, 1999

I. BACKGROUND

Approximately six months ago, the AsMA Executive Director and the CAMA President, Dr. Jack Hastings, informally discussed the possibility of forming a joint task force to discuss the issue of alternative medicine therapeutic modalities and aeromedical disposition. The officers of both Associations agreed to this and gave the green light to proceed. Consequently, a Task Force was organized of AsMA and CAMA members, civilian and military (attch.). It met in the AsMA Home Office on March 26, 1999. The stated objective of the meeting was to review the categories of alternative therapies with particular attention given to those side effects that could degrade pilot performance or compromise flying safety. (The efficacy of therapy was not addressed.) It was anticipated that the product of the meeting would be a paper or resolution containing recommendations for review by AsMA and CAMA for possible joint publication and further action.

II. PROCEEDINGS

Leonard Wisneski, M.D., clinical professor of medicine at George Washington University Medical Center and American Whole Health Medical Director, Bethesda MD, set the stage for the Task Force by presenting a two hour review of the various categories of alternative medicine therapy including herbals, nutrients, acupuncture, voluntary controls, and homeopathic remedies among others. He emphasized that nontraditional treatment is wide- spread among the public and rapidly becoming more popular. Herbs and nutrients are considered food substances and, therefore, are not subject to FDA regulation. Furthermore, much of the literature regarding therapeutic efficacy and side effects of many forms of alternative medicine modalities is anecdotal with few well designed controlled studies or clinical trials. An enormous amount of research, therefore, must be done. In the meanwhile, physicians must act based upon the information at hand.

Subsequent to Dr. Wisneski's presentation, members of the Task Force engaged in a lively and enthusiastic discussion for the remainder of the meeting reaching closure on a number of propositions and recommendations as follows:

A. PROPOSITIONS

1. As there is widespread use of alternative medicine therapy in the general population, it can be assumed the same for pilots.
2. Some therapeutic modalities cause side effects that pose an added threat to flying

safety because of a degradation of pilot performance. These effects can be direct or due to interaction with other traditional medication.

3. In general, physician and pilot awareness need to be increased by availability of literature, publication of articles, and presentations at aerospace medicine professional meetings. Physicians in particular are obligated to better understand alternative medicine.
4. Practitioners of aerospace medicine must broaden their history taking by asking patients if they are taking nontraditional substances and if there are side effects. Furthermore, enquiry should be made as to why the substance is being taken, i.e., is there underlying illness or is there another reason unrelated to illness.
5. Blanket aeromedical disposition prohibitions would be inappropriate at this time. However, there is a need for guidelines and reliable information sources for aviation medical examiners and flight surgeons as well as ongoing studies.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS (ACTION OFFICERS)

1. Organize a joint AsMA/CAMA ad hoc committee on alternative medicine for ongoing discussions and formulation of future actions (**Jeff Davis/Jack Hastings**).
2. Prepare a special issue in Aviation, Space and Environmental Medicine on alternative medicine (**Rich Holt/R. Rayman**).
3. Arrange special session or panel at future AsMA and CAMA scientific meetings (**Respective Scientific Program Chairs**).
4. Include alternative medicine in various courses such as AME seminars, short courses, and aerospace medicine residency curricula (**TBD**).
5. Develop aeromedical disposition policy guidelines, ethical considerations, and directions for research (**TBD**).
6. Consider surveying aviators regarding use of alternative medicine modalities and side effects (**TBD**).

This report will be submitted to the appropriate governing bodies of AsMA and CAMA for review and approval.

Russell B. Rayman, M.D., Cochair
Executive Director, AsMA

John D. Hastings, M.D., Cochair
President, CAMA

AsMA/CAMA
TASK FORCE MEMBERS
(* ATTENDED MARCH 26 MEETING)

* Charles O. Barker

* Keith Brandt

* Tommie Church

* James R. Devoll

* Charles R. Fisher, Jr.

Stephen Goodman

* John D. Hastings, - Cochair

Roger F. Landry

James S. McGhee

* P. Glenn Merchant, Jr.

* Susan E. Northrup

* Russell B. Rayman, - Cochair

* Quay C. Snyder, Jr.

Stephen J.H. Veronneau

Richard S. Williams