

**“It won’t hurt you. It’s natural”  
The treatment of alternative therapies in  
Spanish women’s magazines**

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*Introduction*

Pseudoscience defines the set of practices and beliefs lacking scientific evidence.

Spanish Ministry of Health prepared in 2011 a report including 139 CAM. The report determined that scientific evidence available by then on CAM effectiveness was very scarce if any.

The scientific and academic community considers CAMs as pseudoscientific disciplines since they lack scientific evidence (FECYT, 2016).

Therefore, CAM dissemination in the media contributes to normalize this pseudoscientific phenomenon and fix a false legitimacy (Alonso, 2014).

The contents of women's magazines represent a source of essential information on health issues for women of middle and upper-middle class, modern, dynamic, urban and from 24 to 49 years old.

*Methodology*

The research consisted of carrying out a content analysis of the ten most-read women magazines, according to General Media Study: Vogue, Elle, Cosmopolitan, Divinity, Glamor, Telve, AR, Woman, Clara and Marie Claire. The sample includes natural therapy content between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2016. The read profile is a woman with high economic power and with high educational level.

The search, conducted with 90% scrutiny, has highlighted 498 records.

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**Figure 1: Results by magazine header**

Headers	Readers/month*	Number of records 2015-2016
AR	225.000	49
CLARA	161.000	164
Cosmopolitan	470.000	27
Divinity	430.000	12
Elle	527.000	52
Glamour	342.000	39
MarieClaire	144.000	38
Telva	290.000	66
Vogue	719.000	ND
Woman	182.000	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.490.000</b>	<b>498</b>

(\*) according to EGM: February-November 2017

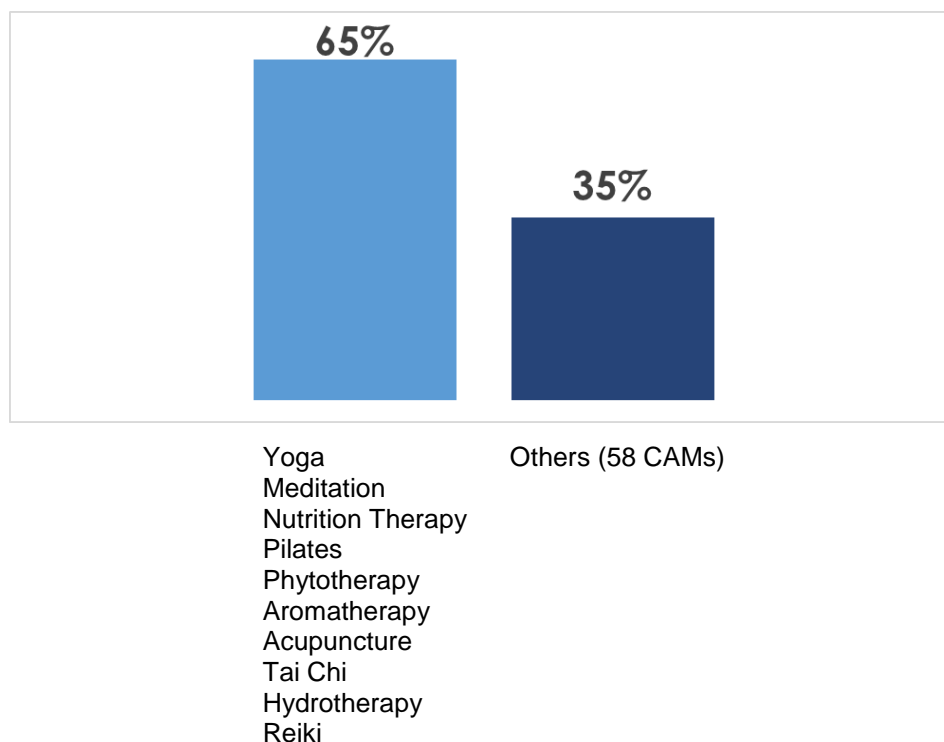
### Results

Of the 498 records obtained, 32% have CAM as the main theme. The remaining 68% integrate the CAM within the media discourse as daily practices.

The 10 most mentioned CAMs in the study accounted for 65% of the total appearances in the analyzed magazines: Yoga, Meditation, Nutrition Therapy, Pilates, Phytotherapy, Aromatherapy, Acupuncture, Tai-Chi, Hydrotherapy and Reiki.

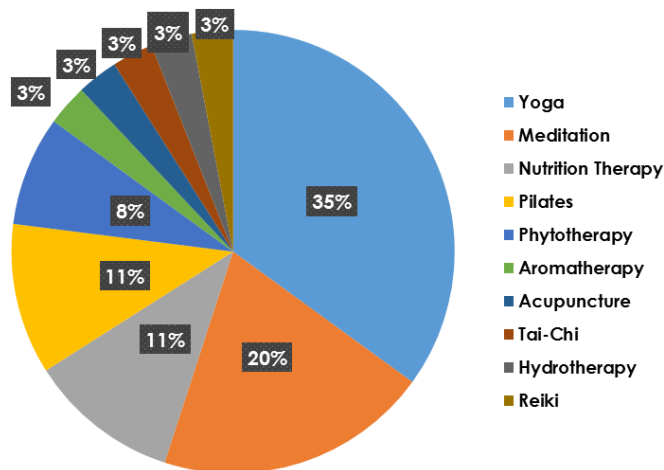
The remaining 35% refer to articles whose CAM presence was very minor.

**Figure 3: 10 most mentioned CAMs**



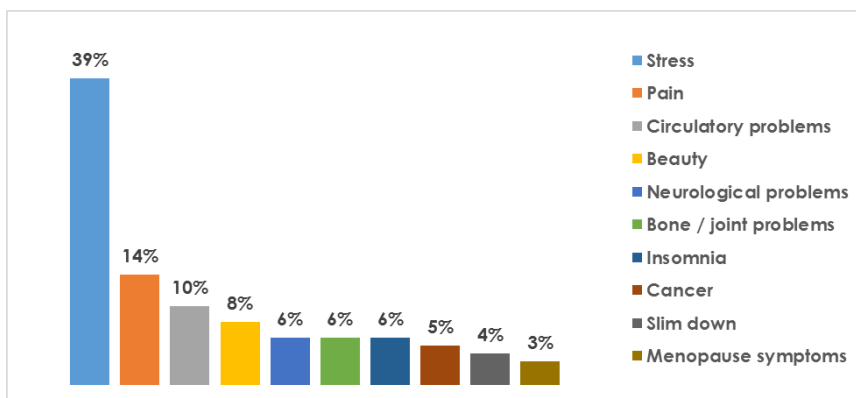
Of the ten most mentioned CAMs, it can be observed that Yoga stands as the CAM with the highest number of appearances in women's magazines with 35% of the results, followed by Meditation (20%) and Nutrition Therapy and Pilates, both with 11%.

**Figure 4: Most mentioned CAMs**



On the other hand, 192 records of the total (38.6%) relate CAM with some disease such as circulatory problems or cancer and with aspects related to lifestyle (stress or beauty). Of these 192 records, the use of CAM is mainly related to stress, which represents 39%.

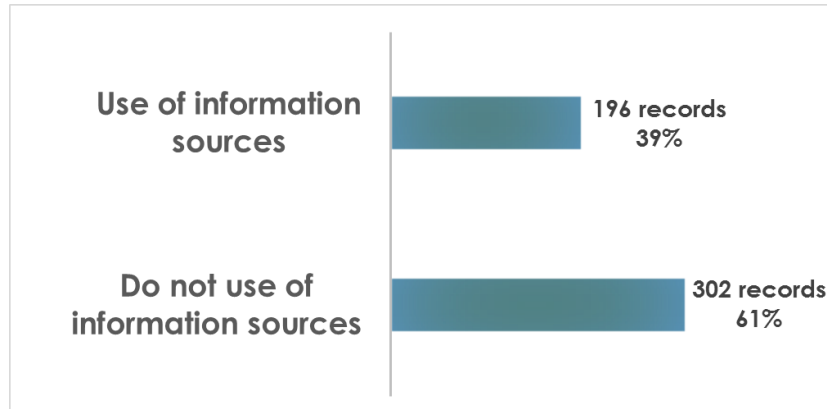
**Figure 5: Most mentioned uses**



Evaluation of the sources of information: Of the 498 records obtained, only 196 use information sources, which represents 39% of the total. Therefore, most of the content on CAM lacks documentary and / or personal resources to argue the statements made in them (61%).

Once again, the integration of the CAM in media discourse is confirmed as a habitual experience, regardless of the lack of references that allow the user to forge an objective knowledge of these practices.

**Figure 6:** Uses of information sources



In the research, the sources of information used for the elaboration of contents related to CAM have been classified into two types: documentary and personal.

Documentary sources have been used in 70 registers, with the employment of studies of diverse nature as the most recurrent option. University studies represent only 7%.

On the other hand, the use of personal sources takes place in 143 registers: experts in CAM and medical experts accumulate the most significant number of entries (45 and 42, respectively).

This data confirms that the contents of CAM in women's magazines tend to create some confusion between expert knowledge and popular or pseudoscientific knowledge.

### *Conclusions*

In the female journals analyzed, the absence of medical rigor in most of the contents related to the CAM is verified, a circumstance that can generate erroneous ideas in the readers that can affect their health. Most of the content found about CAM lacks information sources to confirm the statements made in them.

Thus, to combat this problem, a precise definition of what CAMs are and of the issues that can be caused by their misuse is imposed. Likewise, it is essential to establish a strict division between scientifically proven practices and practices without scientific evidence.

In this way, confusion among the users will be avoided, and they will have all the necessary information to decide if it is convenient to resort to CAM.

### *References*

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