

## The Complementary & Alternative Medicine (CAM) practice in Dorset

---

Alex Stevenson CEO [AlexGuide Ltd](#) (Business Services for Clinics)

Have you ever used a CAM therapy? The chances are that you have. Whether you have suffered a sport or work related injury, have a bad back, want to give up smoking or just want to feel better about yourself there is a CAM therapy that will help. Tired of conventional medicine's surgery or prescription drug approach many seek a more holistic treatment regime which considers body, mind and spirit and CAM provides this.

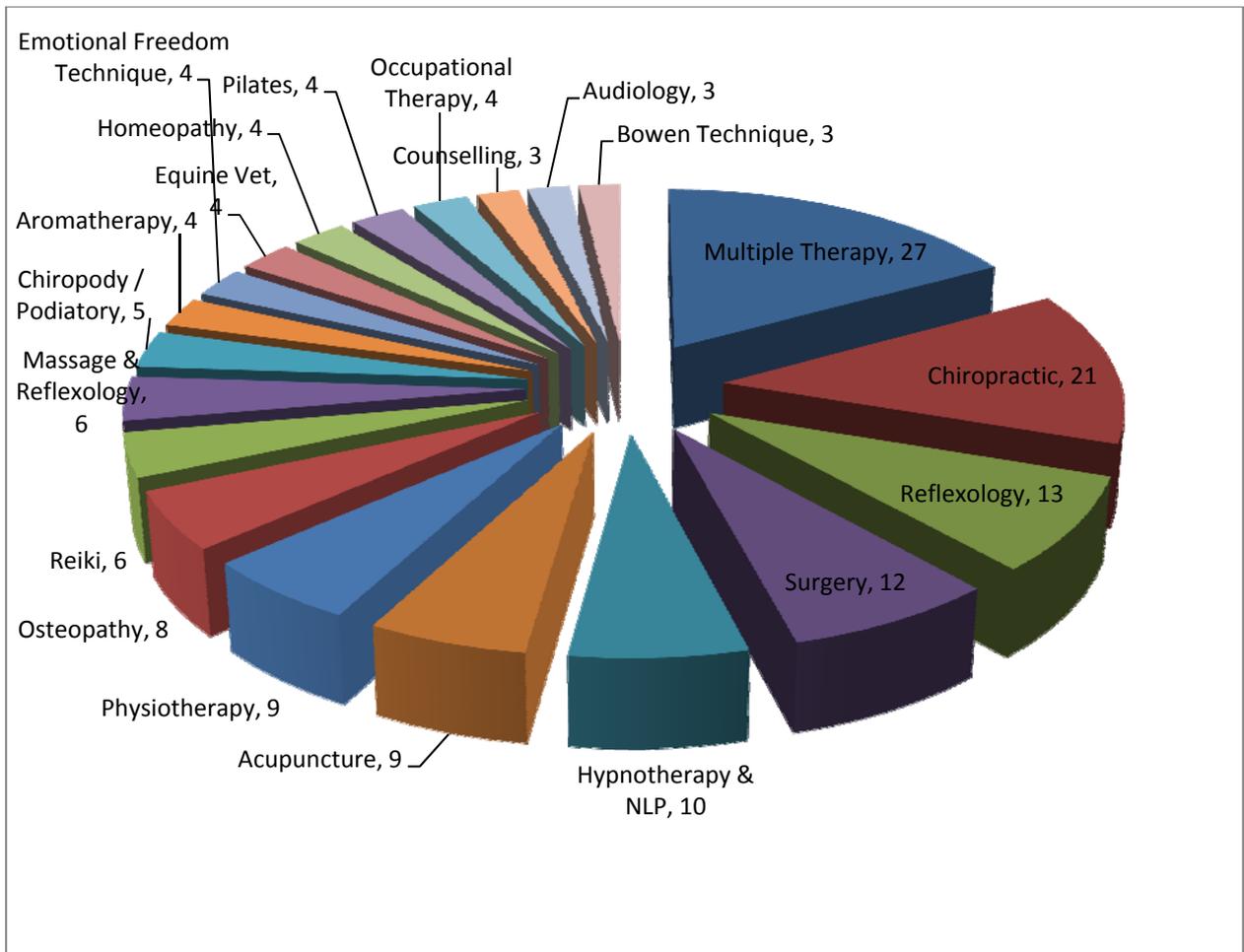
How significant then is the CAM market to Dorset? Well there are 124 clinics with 350 therapists who practice a range of 42 therapies. This represents in excess of two hundred million pounds annual revenue so making it a significant part of the Dorset economy. Although many are individual therapists some of these clinics are of a significant size and practice all over the county. Poundbury Clinic and Charles Street clinic for Dorchester, Wessex Health serves Christchurch, Lightawareness, Brit Chiro and Ocean Health for Bournemouth, 56 London Road for Sherbourne and Beaminster Chiro for Beaminster. Bridport Complementary Medicine Clinic for Bridport, the Wimborne Clinic and since May this year the "new kids on the block" Lilliput Health serve Poole, All have a significant number of therapists and provide a wide range of therapies. All sit comfortably alongside primary healthcare to form what is called Integrated Health.

The South Coast is a key contributor to CAM development and. For instance in Bournemouth the Anglo European Chiropractic College (AECC) is credited with producing 80% of the chiropractors in Europe and has been in business for the last 43 years our close neighbours Southampton University has a well respected CAM research unit and Exeter University had the first chair of complementary medicine in the UK.

Holistic medicine as its sometimes termed covers body, mind and spirit so what of spiritually based therapies? There are far less clinics offering this and as it's a more personal, faith based event it's more likely to be an individually practicing therapist who provides the service though having said that Lightawareness, one of Dorset's largest clinics offer many spiritually based therapies.

It isn't just specialist Dorset clinics that provide these therapies, take for instance BWT Physiotherapy of Poole which has a CAM practice though prefers integrated health as a title; they are one of the largest clinics in the south coast with more than twenty therapists, work with corporates like JPMorgan and have an innovative alliance with West Hants Sports Club. Clearly a sophisticated business they have been practicing Physiotherapy in the area for more than twenty years.

So then what therapies are popular in Dorset? Not surprisingly given the proximity of the AECC, Chiropractic is the most practiced therapy followed by reflexology, hypnotherapy, acupuncture and osteopathy.



Physiotherapy isn't a CAM therapy though most have CAM practices alongside their physiotherapy work. CAM clinics often offer Physiotherapy as it's a close cousin to massage based therapies and is consistent with the CAM philosophy. Physiotherapists have the advantage of being a part of primary care but have the skills to branch into many CAM therapies including Acupuncture, Reiki or any massage based therapies (Indian head etc). Physiotherapy on the other hands suffers from competition from other CAM therapies particularly on the subject of sports injuries. Physiotherapy moreover, does not command a high enough price premium cost-wise over the other therapies to set itself aside from them.

All of these clinics are private healthcare clinics which you can contact directly or be referred to by your GP but the NHS has attention focussed there too. Just this year the NHS has accepted that some of these therapies can play a part in mainstream medicine. The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) issued NICE guideline 88 earlier this year which proposed that certain CAM therapies were effective in treating lower back pain and would be introduced to the NHS as a part of their overall service though as yet it's not clear how fast this will happen or how widespread the coverage will be. Though clearly not a wholesale acceptance of holistic therapies this is still a significant event in the acceptance of holistic therapies as a part of the overall healthcare provision. Conventional medicine still has a critical eye on the rest so caution is advised if you intend to try this out. Many believe that holistic therapies provide only placebo like benefits, that is to say, you believe that you are going to get better, so you get better.

Best practice advice for those who wish to use CAM is to always start with your GP even though you can approach the clinics directly. Your GP must know what you are doing. Secondly know the dangers of each therapy not just the promised improvements as there are many horror stories of therapists overpromising potential clients and not warning them of potential problems. Even conventional medical treatments carry small risks but you are always apprised of this possibility by your GP. Thirdly seek evidence based assessments of the therapy you are considering so that you know whether there is scientific proof of its benefits or that you are expected to take it on faith that it works. Next try to limit the number of treatment sessions you will accept and don't submit to open ended treatment particularly if you are using private healthcare. For some of the more minor less practiced therapies it isn't always clear who is qualified to train and so issue degrees or diplomas. Always check that the therapist is qualified. Check with the relevant association if you are in doubt and they often have a tool on their website to verify that your therapist has qualified. Lastly and not leastly you should select the clinic carefully by considering the following factors. How long have they been practicing, what size, what is their certification status, what locations are served and lastly what is the price? Personal or GP recommendations are of course valuable indicators of how good the clinic is.

Charging for these services is usually by time and transparency of price is an issue here as not all clinics publish their prices. There is often a wide range of charges depending on location and service offered and differs significantly from therapy to therapy. Discounts are usually available for youths, students and OAP's. Payment is always expected at the end of each treatment session but if private medical insurance is involved check first before attending the clinic as many are not prepared to pay out for CAM treatments.

In summary holistic healthcare is becoming more widely accepted in the nation's total integrated healthcare provision but remember to follow the few simple rules and fundamentally involve your GP in the process.

---

### **Clinics in this Article**

Poundbury Clinic, Charles Street Clinic, Wessex Health, Lightawareness, Brit Chiro, Ocean Health, 56 London Road, Beaminster Chiro, Bridport Complementary Medicine Clinic, The Wimborne Clinic, Lilliput Health and BWT Physiotherapy.

### **Therapies in this Article**

Physiotherapy, Reiki, Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Reflexology, Hypnotherapy, Acupuncture, Hypnotherapy & NLP, Massage & Reflexology, Chiropody / Podiatry, Homeopathy, Aromatherapy, Occupational Therapy, Audiology, Bowen Technique and Osteopathy