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# High medical costs decrease 28 percent after 5 years of Transcendental Meditation practice

ROTH MEDIA



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According to a study published this week in the September/October 2011 issue of the *American Journal of Health Promotion* (Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 56-60), people with consistently high health care costs experienced a 28 percent cumulative decrease in physician fees after an average of five years practicing the stress-reducing Transcendental Meditation technique compared with their baseline. Both between and within group comparisons were statistically significant. This study has major policy implications.

In most populations, a small fraction of people account for the majority of health care costs. In the U.S., the highest spending 10% in the general population incurred 60% to 70% of total medical expenditures annually. In the Medicare population, the highest spending 5% incurred 43% of total Medicare costs, and the highest spending 25% of seniors accounted for 85% of total expenses. A large number of these people have consistently high medical bills over many years. (References in article, available upon request.)

Chronic stress is the number one factor contributing to high medical expenses. Stress reduction may help reduce these costs.

This new study compared the changes in physician costs for 284 consistent high-cost participants--142 Transcendental Meditation practitioners with 142 non-practitioners, over five years in Quebec, Canada. The non-TM subjects were randomly selected from Quebec health insurance enrollees with the same age, sex, and region to match the TM participant profiles. The TM participants decided to begin the technique prior to choosing to enter the study. In the year before the intervention began, there were no significant differences between the groups in payments to physicians.

During the five-year assessment period, the TM group's annual rate of change in payments declined significantly ( $p = 0.004$ ), while the comparison group's payments showed no significant changes. After the first year, the TM group decreased 11%, and after 5 years, their cumulative reduction was 28% ( $p = 0.001$ ).

The primary measure for assessing the effectiveness of TM practice in decreasing medical costs was the fees paid by the Quebec health insurance agency to private physicians in all settings for treating study participants. In Canada and U.S., physician payments have been 20% of national health expenditures. This study's results are important because doctors' decisions determine most medical expenses: tests, prescription drugs, hospitalization, surgery, and other treatments.

The paper's sole author, Robert E. Herron, Ph.D., is an independent researcher, and director of the [Center for Health Systems Analysis](#). Dr. Herron was the first to describe the impact of the [Transcendental Meditation](#) technique on health care costs.

This study's findings were similar to earlier ones. In a [previous Canadian study](#), the TM group exhibited reduced medical expenses between 5% and 13% relative to comparison subjects each year for 6 consecutive years.

In a [subsequent Canadian study](#) of senior citizens, the TM group's five-year cumulative reduction for people aged 65 years and older relative to comparison subjects was 70%.

In a sample of American health insurance enrollees, the TM participants had reduced rates of illness in all disease categories. An eleven-year, [cross-sectional study](#) in Iowa found that subjects age 45 and over who practiced the TM technique had 88% fewer hospital days compared with controls. Their medical expenditures were 60% below the norm.

[Other studies](#), including randomized clinical trials, indicate the TM technique can improve physical and mental health, decrease tobacco use, reduce substance abuse, and decrease other unhealthy habits and risk factors that lead to chronic disease and costly treatments.

"This article has major policy significance for saving Medicare and Medicaid without cutting benefits or raising taxes," said Herron. "Almost no intervention for cost containment has decreased medical expenditures by 28% over 5 years from a baseline. Now, it may be possible to rescue Medicare and Medicaid by adding coverage for learning the Transcendental Meditation technique."

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## ADDENDUM

Americans are suffering from soaring levels of chronic stress due to economic problems, home foreclosures, high unemployment and underemployment, and lack of health insurance, which contributes to numerous health problems they cannot afford to treat.

The Huffington Post [reported](#) in May that U.S. health care costs per family more than doubled in nine years. [Milliman, Inc.](#), a premier global consulting and actuarial firm, released the results of their 2011 Milliman Medical Index, which measures the total cost of health care for a typical family of four covered by a preferred provider organization (PPO). The 2011 MMI cost is \$19,393, an increase of 7.3% over 2010, which is the lowest annual rate of increase in more than a decade. Yet even though the rate of increase is the lowest in recent memory, the increase in total dollars--\$1,319 in 2011--is the highest in the history of this study. Even with a historically low annual rate of increase, health care costs for American families reached \$19,393 in 2011. In 2010, the average employee paid \$8,008 for his family's health care, up from \$3,634 in 2002. To view the complete 2011 Milliman Medical Index, download [the report](#).

At a time when health care costs are continuing to rise, the studies of Herron and his colleagues demonstrate that a natural preventative approach could help curb rising health care costs. Benjamin Franklin once said: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Another way of saying it today would be, "An ounce of prevention costs considerably less than a pound of cure!"

## The Transcendental Meditation Program

The [Transcendental Meditation](#) technique is an effortless procedure practiced 10-20 minutes twice a day sitting comfortably with the eyes closed.

TM is a simple natural mind-body practice that does not involve changes in personal beliefs, philosophy or lifestyle.

Over 350 [peer-reviewed research studies](#) on the TM technique confirm a wide range of benefits for mind, body and behavior.

Several studies have compared the effects of different meditation practices and found that Transcendental Meditation provides deeper rest and relaxation, and is more effective at reducing anxiety, depression and hypertension than other forms of meditation and relaxation. In addition, no other meditation practice shows the widespread coherence throughout all areas of the brain that is seen with Transcendental Meditation.

The Transcendental Meditation technique is taught in the United States by a non-profit, educational organization.

More information can be obtained by calling 888-LEARN-TM or visiting [www.tm.org](http://www.tm.org) or [www.AskTheDoctors.com](http://www.AskTheDoctors.com).

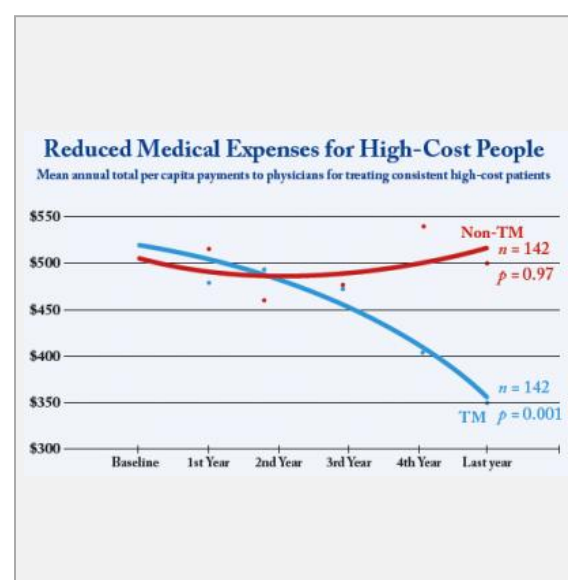
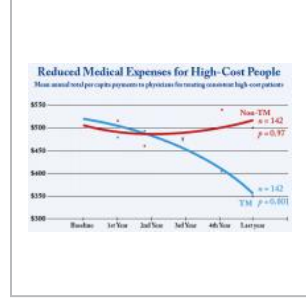


IMAGE: THIS CHART SHOWS THE MEAN ANNUAL TOTAL PER CAPITA PAYMENTS TO PHYSICIANS FOR TREATING CONSISTENT HIGH-COST PATIENTS. THE TM GROUP'S PHYSICIAN EXPENSES DECREASED BY 28% OVER FIVE YEARS. THE ABOVE... [view more >](#)

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