

[Related Articles, Books, LinkOut](#)

Unconventional medicine in Central Europe: a misuse of public health insurance?

Falkenbach A, Herold M

J Altern Complement Med 1999 Oct;5(5):479-81

OBJECTIVE: To scrutinize the presumption maintained by critics that patients seeking medical treatment at a health resort may be more motivated by the prospect of a pleasant sojourn paid for by health insurance than by the impairment caused by a disease. **DESIGN:** Variables for mobility (occiput-to-wall distance, cervical rotation, chest expansion, thoracic flexion, lumbar flexion, and finger-to-floor distance) and C-reactive protein were determined in 181 patients (male 134, female 47; age 52.4 +/- SEM 0.8 years) with ankylosing spondylitis (AS) whose costs were covered by their health insurance (group A) and in 77 AS patients (male 66, female 11; age 51.6 +/- 1.2 years) who paid their own costs (group B). **SUBJECTS:** A group of 258 patients with AS presenting for 3- or 4-week speleotherapeutic radon treatment at the Gasteiner Heilstollen Hospital, a medical institution located at Badgastein in the Austrian Alps. **RESULTS:** After Bonferroni correction for multiple calculations no significant difference was seen between the two groups. **CONCLUSIONS:** The results suggest that patients presenting for medical treatment at a health resort suffer a like degree of disease impairment, whether they pay their own costs or not. There was no evidence that seeking treatment at a health resort may be an attempt by patients to misuse the health insurance for "sponsored" holidays.