Reviewer's report

Title: "Seeing a doctor is just like having a date": A qualitative study on doctor shopping among overactive bladder patients in Hong Kong

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Reviewer: John Yaphe

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Review of:

“Seeing a doctor is just like having a date": A qualitative study on doctor shopping among overactive bladder patients in Hong Kong

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BMC Family Practice
Research article

This paper presents the report of a qualitative study of reasons for doctor shopping among patients with overactive bladder (OAB) in Hong Kong. As such it adds to our knowledge of these two important phenomena: doctor-shopping and OAB. Although it is situated in a specific cultural context with some important features in this setting (such as the use of Traditional Chinese Medicine) that may be unfamiliar to readers, it manages to bridge that gap and clarify this point. It also addresses the issues of continuity of care, the doctor patient relationship and coping with chronic, unexplained physical symptoms.

The introduction places the problem in the context of existing research on both OAB and doctor shopping. It presents a clear justification for the study. The literature cited is current and relevant. I am interested to know how the author became interested in this area and chose this topic for the study. I wonder if the author is involved in some way with the OAB patient support group described in the study. This might be worth clarifying in the introduction.

The method is clearly described. The author is obviously familiar with qualitative research methods (long interviews) and has quoted appropriate sources for her method. The population is well described. The study received prior ethical approval and was conducted in an ethical manner.

The results section begins with an unclear statement that doctor shopping in this population meets the “scholarly definition of a, b and d”. It would be better to state clearly what definition was used and what behaviours were reported that meet this definition.

The classification of results under patient perception, environmental factors, illness experience and cultural factors is logical and relevant. The use of direct
quotations from the transcript is helpful. It is useful to have more than one example from different subjects to support the use of the category created. The example of shaming or teasing by the doctor as an unpleasant experience is a powerful one.

The simultaneous use of public and private medicine, primary care and hospital medicine and insured and uninsured services is problematic in many countries. This adds to the general interest of this paper.

The concept of “seeking a match with the doctor” and comparing that to courtship or dating behaviour is novel and interesting. I can understand why the author chose to use this provocative comment in her title.

The integration of traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine by OAB patients is another fascinating behaviour explored in this patient. It is relevant to readers in other countries as well because of increasing use of CAM in addition to orthodox medicine.

The discussion begins with a clear restatement of the main findings of the study. There is a good exploration of the external validity of the findings with reference to relevant published literature. The discussion of internal validity is more limited though the study appears to have been well designed and well conducted with a solid analysis of the data collected.

Minor essential revisions

The quality of the written English is high but there are a few errors in English usage. The paper would benefit from additional English language editing.

For example:

In the Methods section, in the description of “The Participants”, “They were working in civil service, administration and executing…” should read “administration and executive functions” or “administration and management”.

In the last sentence of the same section on “The Participants”, the sentence “They performed doctor shopping when they sought medical treatment aside of their bladder conditions.” Should read: “They also engaged in doctor shopping when they sought medical treatment for other conditions aside from their bladder symptoms.”

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.