Reviewer's report

Title: General practitioners knowledge and practice of complementary/alternative medicine and its relationship with life-styles: a population-based survey in Italy

Version: 1 Date: 27 November 2006

Reviewer: George Lewith

Reviewer's report:

This is a very simple and straight forward paper which reduplicates studies that have previously been done in Australia the US and the UK. It’s fascinating to see that differences between Italy and other countries, the paper in essence suggests that there are many more similarities than differences although Italian doctors tend to refer less to Complementary Medicine.

Basically I think this paper is an important benchmark for Italian CAM practice and would have thought that what we get out of Tuscany is pretty much what we’ll get out of the whole of Italy. The paper should be published.

There are some things in the paper which need clarification. It’s self evident that there’s much detailed input required to all sections of the paper in terms of sentence structure and use of words. However in the introduction it is clear that the authors have a grasp of the main issues and furthermore they define their research question appropriately. The methods section is a bit slim on why they selected the particular types of CAM that they were using. Most UK, US and French and German doctors would not know what mesotherapy was or pranotherapy. We are not told how the male GPs were randomised or the rationale for selecting all the females and 60% of the males. That needs to be justified: why miss out 40% of the potential participants?

The methods need tightening up in these areas both in terms of justifying the selection process and explaining the therapies to those who may not understand them because some of them are peculiarly Italian.

I think the results section needs to start with the response rate which was substantial, that’s not something you should be putting in the methods. The analysis seems to me to be entirely competent and I wouldn’t suggest that that’s changed at all, however the discussion is somewhat long and rambling and slightly over interpretive. My feeling is that we should be able to get most of the concepts over in about 500 words (2 pages) with adequately edited English.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests