Reviewer's report

Title: What Rheumatologists in the United States Think of Complementary and Alternative Medicine: Results of a National Survey

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Reviewer: Andre Busato

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The study describes attitudes and practices of US rheumatologists toward complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)

There are several points to criticize:

The introduction states that behavioral medicine and counseling/psychotherapy were also included in the project. These data are not mentioned in the results and discussion.

The section “Methods” is difficult to understand and remains non-transparent.

What is the percentage of 600 rheumatologists of the total of all US rheumatologists, and what is the fraction of the number of participating rheumatologists (respondents) to this overall number?

It remains unclear how exactly the questions were formulated.

The section “Survey Instrument” mentions a second question that is aimed at the familiarity with 6 common CAM procedures. In the section “Data management” a similar item is described as “prevailing attitudes and practices of conventional rheumatologists regarding common CAM modalities”. Are these the same items?

In “Dependent Variables” a question is formulated as “How beneficial do you think each of these therapies is for chronic back pain or joint pain”. In “Data management” another second question is given: “How do rheumatologists’ perceptions of CAM efficacy and their willingness to recommend CAM” Are these the same items?

Beneficial does not necessarily imply efficacy, a differentiation is therefore important as beneficial can be seen from several sides e.g. from the patient or from the physician, and efficacy refers to the results of clinical trials. Perceived efficacy is also mentioned in the discussion and this term is also not necessarily related to the original question.

I suggest that all questions are listed in their original form with their possible answer levels in the M&M section to clarify these issues.

Statistical procedures
Assumptions of proportional odds models require that all logit surfaces are parallel (proportional odds assumptions). Where these assumptions tested in this study?

“Data management” mentions uni- and multivariate procedures, however, the results and discussion sections are obviously only aimed at results of multivariate analyses. What was the rationale of performing univariate procedures and I assume that the structure of the models i.e. the set of cofactors other than the factor interest were equal for all three questions tested in this study.

General remarks
The importance of the results of recommending medical procedures that currently provided only limited evidence of efficacy in clinical trials should be discussed in the context of high and still increasing health care costs in the US (and in other countries …).

Pro CAM provider attributes and participatory practice style can be important factors of patient satisfaction and may indirectly affect overall therapeutic success. Some discussion could be added in this context.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
'I declare that I have no competing interests'