Reviewer’s report

Title: Rural community pharmacists' views on complementary and alternative medicine: A pilot study

Version: 1 Date: 1 August 2011

Reviewer: Susan Semple

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting article which is generally well written. While this is pilot study as indicated in the title, it has been adequately conducted. I make some suggestions for revisions below – some of which I feel may make it more interesting to an international audience reading the journal.

Major compulsory revisions

Importantly, the version I had access to did not appear to have an abstract – please ensure this included in the journal’s required format.

I think the article title should indicate where the study has been undertaken – i.e. Australia

Background

A lot is made of this being a comparison with the study conducted by the National Prescribing Service (NPS). While this was certainly a landmark study in Australia – I think for an international audience there needs to some explanation of the role of the NPS in Australia and why their study was conducted. I think this then makes a better case for why a similar study in a rural group is interesting.

Additionally in terms of the background and rationale for the study an explanation for why the study would be of interest to readers in other countries should also be given. What research has been done in rural areas of other developed countries similar to Australia?

Methods

The dates (months, year) over which the study was conducted should be given.

I was unclear about the inclusion/exclusion criteria for the study in terms of part-time workers. It is stated in the results that some questionnaires were excluded because respondents were part-time but this was not stated as an exclusion criteria in the methods or what the cut-off in terms of number of hours per week was. This should be clarified in the methods section. Given that many pharmacists work part-time could this limit the generalizability of the results?

It would be better to state which actual register was used select the pharmacists in the region (?Pharmacy Board).

It is stated that the data collection questionnaire was based on a previously designed and validated tool – this is referenced to reference 34 which is the NPS
consumer survey. My reading of the rationale of the study was to test the tool used by the NPS for the Pharmacist CAM survey – please clarify this.

Given that the questionnaire has been adapted it may be useful to include it as an appendix as it is not clear how questions may be different to those used by the NPS.

I think the limitations section should be moved to the discussion section so that it is read after the results.

Results
It is not clear if the differences in confidence between the different age groups were statistically significant.

Discussion
There are some “results” that appear for the first time in the discussion section (such as hours per week worked; % practising integrative care, % working as accredited pharmacists). These should be moved to the results section and only the discussion of the results and comparison with other studies included in the discussion section. It would also be useful for an international audience to clarify what an “Accredited” pharmacist is.

As indicated above the limitations section should be moved to the discussion section – the limitations of the generalizability of the findings to all rural pharmacists should be stated given that the study has only been conducted in one rural region.

As indicated for the background section - it would be useful to have some more discussion of comparisons with the international literature where possible.

Minor essential revisions
Results
The actual response rate (that is percentage) should be stated.

In table 2 – some of the categories do not add up to 100% - if this is because of a lack of response to the question then a legend stating this should be included at the bottom of the table

Discretionary Revisions
Results
Under the section on information seeking behaviour “specific websites” are stated as being popular sources /useful sources. It would be interesting to include a few examples of the most popular sites if this information was collected.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
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