Reviewer's report

Title: Developing a Patient-Centered Outcome Measure for Complementary and Alternative Medicine Therapies I: Defining Content and Format

Version: 1 Date: 23 November 2011

Reviewer: Johanna Hok

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written presentation of a very important and rigorous piece of work. The developed patient-centered outcome measure is of high scientific quality and has the potential to contribute significantly to future high-quality evaluations of complex interventions including CAM. I highly recommend BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine to publish the paper. My comments below are solely of discretionary character, i.e. recommendations for improvement but which the authors can choose to ignore.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
Yes.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Yes.

I suggest that the authors specify more explicitly how they, among themselves, defined what was considered "shifts in well-being associated with CAM treatments" (p. 10) in the 106 analyzed interview transcripts. Was there a consensus regarding this term before the secondary analysis?

3. Are the data sound?
The data used for the development of the outcome measure are rich, rigorous and well presented.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes.

I suggest that the authors also discuss possible other areas, outside or closely connected to CAM, where this outcome measure may be used, e.g. within other complex health care systems and therapies that may not be categorized as CAM.

Furthermore, it may be helpful if the authors would discuss the outcome measure in relation to different contexts. For example, how would the measure work in a
context where CAM is used for symptom management only? And how would the measure work in a context where the use of CAM is used or delivered as a whole system of care explicitly addressing different dimensions of an individual’s health and illness?

I suggest a revision of the first sentence in the discussion (p. 22), "...as a result of CAM therapies, ...". Since patients' reports seldom states a clear cause-effect relationship, I suggest a revision accordingly, e.g. "Patients using CAM report experiencing shifts in their well-being..."

I also suggest that the authors relate their large data set and the developed outcome measure to other data on individuals’ experiences of CAM, e.g. the meta-synthesis by Smithson et al (J Health Serv Res Policy 2010).

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Yes.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   Yes.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
   Yes.

**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 I have no competing interests.