Reviewer's report

Title: Association of Health Literacy with Complementary and Alternative medicine use: A Cross-sectional study in Adult Primary Care Patients

Version: 2 Date: 4 November 2011

Reviewer: Vinjar Fonnebo

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Major compulsory:
1. The authors are upholding the sequence of their analysis. This is unacceptable. They have documented that race is an effect modifier in the study of the association of health literacy with complementary and alternative medicine use. It then gives no meaning in presenting results of the general association with the race categories combined. To illustrate by an example: If a risk factor is associated with a 90% lower risk in one race and a 10-fold increase in another race, it gives no meaning to state that there is no association between the risk factor and disease.

2. The authors have given the number of individuals recruited and the number completing the surveys. Please give also the number invited.

3. Table 2 uses rounding inconsistently. In addition the first row showing overall CAM use uses percentages completely differently than all other rows (It shows percentages among those with adequate and inadequate literacy in relation to all persons reporting CAM use). The first row should show percentages in the same way as the other rows (Percentage using a therapy divided by all subjects within the respective adequate or inadequate health literacy category). The text needs to be changed accordingly. The sentence "There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of adequately and inadequately health literate patients." gives no meaning. The p-value relates to the proportion using CAM in persons with adequate or inadequate literacy!!

4. The following two sentences given in the first paragraph of the discussion are challenging: "We also found that a majority of our patients utilized CAM compared to those that did not. In our sample patients that used CAM were more likely to have adequate health literacy." They found that a majority of the patients used CAM, but who were they comparing with?? In addition I see no results presented showing that patients using CAM had higher health literacy. I do see results in table 2 showing that CAM use was quite similar in the two levels of health literacy (The result was not statistically significant). As noted above they have a very different indication of percentages in the first row of table 2.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
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