Reviewer's report

**Title:** The prevalence and experience of Australian naturopaths and Western herbalists working within community pharmacies

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 22 November 2010

**Reviewer:** Anthony Zhang

**Reviewer's report:**

Reviewer Report:

This paper investigated the integration of naturopathy and western herbal medicine within the community pharmacy sector in Australia. A sample of the practitioners was invited to complete an on-line survey. Overall it is an important topic providing much needed data in the complementary and alternative field, details below are issues that need addressing.

- **Major Compulsory Revisions**

  **Abstract:**
  
  Please provide the geographic location of the survey being conducted. Were the survey participants recruited from all states/territories in Australia? Please make reference to the representation of the survey participants to the national/state profile (even to some extent that the data allows).

  **Introduction:**
  
  As rightly pointed out by the authors, little is known about the prevalence of naturopaths and WHM practitioners working in the pharmacy setting. Unfortunately, results presented in the current paper do not provide details on this matter. Please make references to existing data on naturopaths and WHM practitioners workforce data in Australia, e.g. studies published by Bensoussan et al (2004) in Complement Ther Med and Lin et al (2009) in Risk Management and Healthcare Policy and give details on what new data were collected through the current survey.

  **Method:**
  
  How many emails/letters were sent to the practitioners in the mailing list and those identified through websites? One common problem for on-line survey is the validity of the responses collected through anonymous self-completion. Please explain what steps were taken to address this issue. Did people receive reminder email to complete the survey?

- **Minor Essential Revisions**

  **Abstract:**
  
  How many naturopaths and western herbalists were invited to participate in the
survey?

Line 11, please be more specific what is “…this was generally described as a positive learning experience…”.

The conclusions can be further elaborated in terms of what are the identified issues for the integration of naturopathy and WHM in the pharmacy setting.

Introduction:
What are “solidly orthodox methods…” (line 4)?

Method:
Data analysis section indicated means +/- standard errors, Wilcoxon Rank Sum tests and IQR. These have not been reflected in the result section?

Results:
Most respondents were female, it would be helpful to compare this to the existing workforce data (see comments above).

Information exchange between pharmacists and practitioners is of special interest as discussed in the Discussion section. Subgroup analysis would be useful.

Discussion:
Page 10 paragraphs 2-3 are not relevant, in particular, para 3 “…it can be assumed they…”.

Page 10, first heading should read “financial considerations for naturopaths [and WHM practitioners]”.

Page 11 para 1, please elaborate what are “…several problems and concerns from the complementary medicine perspective…”.

Please provide more information on “characteristics of gender and age are similar to two other previously Australian surveys…” Please also make reference to the study by Lin et al (2009) in Risk Management and Healthcare Policy.

Please further discuss the study limitations and their implications for future research.

Conclusion:
It is not clear what are “several practical and philosophical issues need to be resolved”.

References:
Format issue: Ref 14, Ref 22, Ref 23 ad Ref 24.
Duplications: Refs 17 and 19; Refs 18 and 20.

Tables:
Please use the same format for tables 1-3.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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’