Reviewer’s report

Title: Alternative Health Care Consultations in Ontario, Canada: A Socio-Demographic and Geographic Analysis

Version: 1 Date: 18 April 2011

Reviewer: Chi Wai Lui

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript provides a socio-demographic and geographic analysis of CAM consultations in Canada. The focus of this paper especially on geographical differences of CAM consumption addresses a gap in the literature of CAM use. The paper will be of interest to the general BMC CAM readership.

Here are issues in the paper that need to be addressed or improved:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The scope of the literature review of the paper is far too narrow. Although the authors claimed that ‘Both Canadian and international studies demonstrate similar trends…’, they referred throughout the paper exclusively to studies conducted in North America (USA and Canada). There was little mention of relevant research conducted in Europe or Australia in recent years.

2. The Discussion section is relatively weak for restating the results reported in the earlier section. The authors should draw out further the implications of their study as well as to reflect and contextualize the findings in terms of the wider literature (cf. the last comment).

3. The legend of Figure 1 is incorrect. Will it be ‘Consultation Rates’ rather than ‘Public Health Units’? The meaning of the title of this figure is also unclear.

4. Figure 2 is missing and the current figure is a duplicate of Figure 6.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. ‘(Williams 2000)’ in p.2 line 4 is redundant.

2. The word ‘analysis’ has gone missing in p.3 line 5: ‘The geographic ANALYSIS employs two variables….’

3. The claims made in this paragraph needed to be backed up with proper references/evidence: ‘The popularity of massage may be due to the work of Professional Associations/Organizations…. In addition, men are more likely to use acupuncture for pain management given their shorter pain threshold when compared to women.’ (p. 16).

4. This is a run-together sentence: ‘Higher urban rates could be due to higher economic opportunity for practitioners due to the density of the population
characteristic of urban areas’ (p. 16). It needs to be rewritten with the argument elaborated.

Discretionary Revisions:
1. The authors may consider deleting the definitions of massage therapy, acupuncture and homeopathy/naturopathy in p. 2. The readers of the BMC CAM should have a basic understanding of what these therapies are. This helps cutting down the paper which is already too long.

2. The authors should either cut down the use of abbreviations or provide a list of them (e.g. CCHS, PUMF, PHU CMA, CA, MIZ, RDC etc) in the beginning of the paper to help the readers.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests