Reviewers report

Title: Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Regulation of the Market for Complementary and Alternative Medicine Products in Lebanon: A Qualitative Study

Version: 1 Date: 10 June 2011

Reviewer: Heather Boon

Reviewers report:

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The authors talk about “CAM products and herbal remedies” throughout without ever defining what is meant by these terms or explaining why herbal remedies are not included in the term “CAM products”. A clear definition is needed.

2. The paper is full of generalizations and over-statements that are not referenced and decrease the credibility of the work. Examples of these include:
   - “The benefits of CAM products can never be over stated” p. 4
   - “Thousands of years of usage, all across the globe, has proven their efficacy and cost effectiveness” p. 4
   - “The combined use of CAM and orthodox products has proven cost effective at the individual and organizational levels” (p. 4 – supported by a single reference to a specific study in a specific context)

3. The paper seems to be a mix of a critical analysis of the current regulatory system and a discussion of how to best use regulation to facilitate integration of CAM products into the healthcare system – these two objectives are not necessarily aligned and need to be separated and addressed individually (or the paper needs to more clearly focus on one or the other).

4. Thematic analysis – please add references to help the reader understand the type of analysis you did

5. Results – need to add a description of the participants as well as an overall introduction to the results section. Simply listing the code names at the beginning is not helpful – the authors need to explain, at a more conceptual level, how the results will be organized and what the key themes/findings were.

6. There are too few quotes in the results to support the claims about the findings. The quotes are your data and are needed to convince the reader of the veracity of your summary of what you found.

7. It is not clear how information about “triggers of CAM consumption” is part of the “Market Categorization” theme

8. There are various sections in the results that provide context/explanation of
the regulatory process for CAM products in Lebanon (e.g., p13-15 and Figure 2). These are not “Results” but rather background context that should be provided for the reader in the introduction. The results should focus on your participants’ critique/perceptions/comments etc about the regulations and the regulatory process.

9. There seems to be a strong call for increasing the powers of the “Expert Committee” that appears to have been recently disbanded. How many of your informants were part of that committee and is there possibly some self-serving motive associated with their comments on this topic? This should be addressed in the discussion.

10. Discussion – you spend a fair amount of the time talking about public use of CAM and lack of knowledge on the part of the public and health care practitioners in the discussion that is not based on anything presented in the results section. I am sure that most of this is true, but it could have been written without doing this study. The discussion needs to be more focused on explaining our findings and contextualizing them within the previous literature. I would also argue that comparing your participants’ recommendations to the current regulatory framework for over the counter drugs would be informative. In our previous interviews with stakeholders about CAM regulations we sometimes found they wanted more stringent controls than currently existed for drugs which seemed out of proportion to the risks associated with these products.

11. Delete the focus in the discussion on CAM education in medical and nursing curricula as this seems to have no relationship to your study findings at all.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Several comments about the “fast and steady growth” of number of CAM products in Lebanon, but no references to support this

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Methods – less technically detail on exactly how the data were collected and more detail on how the participants were chosen/found would strengthen the paper.

2. Discussion – some comparison of how the CAM products regulation compares to over-the-counter drugs would be very helpful

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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'