Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 22 June 2011

Reviewer: Torkel Falkenberg

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting qualitative survey of CAM stakeholder perspectives in Lebanon regarding regulation of CAM related products. However, there a number of issues and statements that need compulsory revision before the manuscript can be accepted for publication:

1. The aim of the study seems to be to identify barriers to the integration of CAM therapies into mainstream medicine. Although, this is an interesting and indeed challenging prospect for any health system world wide, it is not clear that this is an appropriate approach. In order to suggest such a broad and inclusive strategy for e.g. a regulatory framework one would need evidence in support of such a strategy, i.e. evidence based policymaking. Hence, the authors needs to problematize this to a much larger extent, and clearly underline the lack of such a global/national strategy. Of course, research like the one presented here, may very well contribute to such an evidence base for decision making. But the lack of efficacy, safety and quality data is a real concern for recommending all CAM therapies to be integrated.

2. There is a general lack of discussing the area in relation to other international initiatives including WHO recommendations (e.g. WHO TM strategy). This should be improved.

3. The whole paragraph with the "argument for regulation" and that "the benefits of CAM products can never be overstated" is an oversimplification and that "The combined use of CAM and orthodox products has proven cost effective at the individual and organization levels [11]" is not correct. We clearly lack such evidence today, and such future research will be crucial for addressing the potential barriers and facilitators to integration. Here the authors, should avoid such bold and incorrect statements.

4. One of the results indicate the current lack of legal enforcement and this is a common problem in most middle/low income countries. Please address this finding in relation to the vast array of similar findings in the medicinal area internationally, and point in the discussion of how to solve such issues based on previously published scientific recommendations.

5. A policy for CAM medicinal products should probably be linked in some way to a national drug policy, please describe how a policy can be developed in such a
way in Lebanon, possibly a part of your discussion.

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

**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