Reviewer's report

Title: A Comparison of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Users and Use across Geographical Areas: A National Survey of 1,427 Women

Version: 1 Date: 7 July 2011

Reviewer: Yuri Clement

Reviewer's report:

General comments

This descriptive study was cross-sectional in design and included 1,427 female CAM users in Australia. The study aimed to determine the factors which affect CAM use in urban and rural settings. It was shown that CAM use was influenced by accessibility to healthcare and sense of community.

Major compulsory revisions

Background

This section is generally well written. However, there seems to be an overuse of the literature.

Methods

The study design seems appropriate for its descriptive nature. What is the connection between neighbourhood safety and community and CAM use?

Results

This section is generally well written. However, in the METHODS sections women were asked about their chronic disease status and quality of life. Were there differences in chronic disease states across geographical settings? Was hypertension and diabetes more common in urban as opposed to rural communities? Did women living in rural communities have better quality of life? This information was not presented in this section and may be useful in attempting to explain some of the differences in CAM use across urban and rural communities, particularly in relation to satisfaction with conventional health care. Was it possible to determine which CAMs were used for which specific chronic disease/complaints?

What was the post Chi-square test used? In Tables 1 and 2, p values are given for comparisons between groups – what was the statistical test used here?

In the METHODS section it was stated that ANOVA, and subsequently Bonferroni-Dunn t-test was used for multiple comparisons. It is assumed that these statistical tests were performed for the items using the 5-point Likert scales, particularly for rating of healthcare providers and services. However, in Table 2, good/very good and excellent were lumped together and Chi-square was performed on these categories. Was this intentional?

Discussion
This section could be better developed with respect to satisfaction with health care, including the accessibility to CAM. Some parts of this section should be in RESULTS, eg. chronic disease status and quality of life across geographic settings. From the results presented in Table 2, rural women had limited access to BOTH conventional healthcare and CAM; yet, paradoxically the authors concluded that being in the rural setting predicted an increased use of CAM.

**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'