Author's response to reviews

Title: Development and Implementation of an Herbal and Natural Product Elective in Undergraduate Medical Education

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Thank you for providing helpful comments for manuscript #1280799051670688 entitled “Development and Implementation of an Herbal and Natural Product Elective in Undergraduate Medical Education”.

I have addressed the comments of the two reviewers and the editorial requests and I outlined those changes below.

Reviewer #1:

As a discretionary suggestion I would like to see more discussion around the need to view H/NP as 'medications' in both the physician and patient context.

Author Response:
An additional paragraph pertaining to dietary supplements as medicines has been added to page 18 of the manuscript.

Reviewer #2:

Desc comments: Key word consider to add: Integrated therapies,

Author response: I added “integrated therapy” as a key word

1. Frequently alternative therapies are of the nature of N=1 clinical trials and follow up with the patient is suggested if not mandatory.

Author response: The CAM 742 course is focused on evidence-based medicine looking at double-blind, placebo-controlled trials. We do, however, spend a considerable amount of time discussing why some patients may experience a response, while others do not (e.g. placebo effect, genetics, etc.)

Furthermore, the relationship and rapport between physicians and patients is a key theme throughout the course and in our entire medical school curriculum. At our medical school, we have a Patient Centered Medical Home Longitudinal Curriculum for 3rd and 4th year medical students where the patient-physician relationship is emphasized during. Therefore, patient follow-up is an inherent part of that relationship and is emphasized across our clinical curriculum. These ideas of patient-centeredness are included on page 18 of the manuscript.

2. These therapies can greatly reduce health care costs if understood by the medical community. Doctors should have knowledge of these specialists in CAM and work with them for best patient resolutions.

Author response: In the absence of evidence (and a reference that I can cite), I am hesitant to state that dietary supplements can greatly reduce healthcare costs. I did, however, mention that students have expressed interest in identifying CAM providers in their new locations once they begin residency training (last sentence before the Discussion – page 16).

3. Another reference might suggest Natural Standard.
Author response: I agree that this is another potential evidence-based reference. We simply do not have access to it at our institution, therefore, it is not a resource that we utilize.

4. Other resources are Alternative Health newsletters as Nutrition and Healing Jonathan V. Wright MD and a web site from Dr Joseph Mercola Mercola.com

Author response: Again, as the emphasis in the course is on evidence-based medicine, I have not promoted the many newsletters that are written by individual practitioners. I do, concur, however, that these resources may provide students with an alternative perspective than what they typically encounter in medical school.

5. Exam question #14 on BHRT: There are 6 major hormones (3 estrogens, progesterone, testosterone, and DHEA) used in BHRT and the suggested answers are too general - I feel some of the hormones might be helpful while others not. This question could be misleading.

Author response: Thank you for this helpful comment and I will take this under advisement in preparing pre- and post-test materials in future academic years. The physician who has given guest lectures on the topic of BHRT has included only estradiol, estriol, and progesterone in her lectures of BHRT. In the limited experience that I have with compounding BHRT for patients, I have only seen estradiol, estriol, and progesterone utilized. I did not realize that testosterone and DHEA were also considered by other providers to be components of BHRT.

Editorial requests:

1. Abstract
Please ensure that you include an abstract in the manuscript file, and that the abstract is identical in the manuscript file and on the submission system. Abstracts should not cite references, nor refer to figures or tables. Please check the instructions for authors to ensure that your abstract follows the correct structure for this journal and article type.

Author response: I added a Methods heading to the Abstract.

2. Structure
Please check the instructions for authors on the journal website to ensure that your manuscript follows the correct structure for this journal and article type.

Author response: I moved the Methods section forward.

If there are any other Editorial requests or details that I overlooked in the Author Instructions, I would be happy to correct them, if the errors are brought to my attention.

Thank you for your time and constructive comments.

Sincerely,

Kelly Karpa, RPh, PhD