Reviewer's report

Title: Patients' expectations of private osteopathic care in the UK: a national survey of patients

Version: 1 Date: 14 March 2013

Reviewer: Felicity Bishop

Reviewer's report:

This is a novel and large survey of patients' expectations of osteopathic care in the UK, using a bespoke questionnaire developed using qualitative methods. The findings are new and I expect of interest to osteopaths but also to the wider CAM and musculoskeletal health communities.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I would like to see some additional conceptual/methodological consideration of the nature of expectations and the timing of their measurement. In the introduction, expectations are described as 'epiphenomenal' but this could be interpreted as suggesting they are therefore not a meaningful subject for study and are unlikely to predict or causally determine important outcomes of care. If expectations are highly influenced by therapeutic interactions etc., then wouldn't it be advisable to measure them before treatment begins, as well as or instead of retrospectively?

2. I am uncomfortable with terming expectations 'important' on the basis that they are endorsed by 75% of the respondents. I would prefer to see a term used that more accurately reflects the basis of this classification in frequency data (e.g. "prevalent" expectations).

3. Please comment on the representativeness of your sample of the 32.4% of participating osteopaths compared to the original random sample of 800, if possible including a formal comparison of osteopath responders/nonresponders.

Minor Essential Revisions

4. The description of the questionnaire in the methods section is lacking in detail, e.g. how many items, how long did it take to complete, were there separate ratings of strength of each expectation vs whether or not it was met? Some of these details can be uncovered elsewhere but should be clearly stated in the methods.

5. What was the range and average number of respondents recruited from the participating osteopaths? Please add this to Results.

6. The Conclusions section of the abstract is a little long and the penultimate two sentences should be deleted as they go beyond the data/interpretation presented in this paper.

Discretionary Revisions
7. Suggest changing the subheading "Intervention" to one more suited to this type of research design, e.g. "Procedure".

8. Please add sub-headings for the first two paragraphs of the results. Consider moving the results of the pilot study into the Methods section to clarify the description of the questionnaire instrument.

9. Clarify in the text whether the questionnaires were returned via osteopaths or directly to the researchers.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests