Reviewer's report

Title: Development of the adult and child complementary medicine questionnaires fielded on the National Health Interview Survey.

Version: 1 Date: 24 July 2013

Reviewer: Karine Toupin April

Reviewer's report:

General comments:
This paper is important as it explains how the National Health Interview Survey questionnaires were developed to describe complementary medicine use and associated factors in the United States. However, more detail and clarity should be provided on the rationale, methods and results of the study. The organization of the paper should also be improved.

Minor essential revisions:

Specific comments

Abstract:
1. The abstract seems adequate. However, the authors mention using quantitative analyses and focus groups. The first is a type of analysis and the second is a method, but it is unclear how the authors gathered the quantitative information and what this information consisted of.

Introduction:
2. The authors should explain the rationale for asking questions on CAM in the NHIS.

Major compulsory revisions:

Methods:
3. More detail should be provided on the methods. For example, the goals of the various methods used, as well as their participants and their process, should be described more thoroughly. This includes the goals of the literature review (e.g. to identify types of CAM or other items to assess), the process used to obtain feedback from experts and the general public (e.g. focus groups, individual interviews, types of questions asked), as well as the characteristics of the participants (e.g. which types of experts, sampling strategy). The authors should use common guidelines for reporting the methodology of qualitative/mixed methods studies (see Equator network website with list of reporting guidelines for the various study designs).

4. Also, the headings used for the different steps of the development process are not very clear (possibly because it is ordered by survey year). The authors
should number the various phases (like in the abstract) and label subheadings in a more consistent manner. This will help the reader to understand the methods and results.

Results:

5. More detail should be provided on the results. For example, the various results from the literature review (e.g. types of CAM or other items to assess), participants’ characteristics and how many experts and members of the general public have made recommendations.

6. (same as comment 1 but for the results section) Also, the authors mention using quantitative analyses and focus groups. The first is a type of analysis and the second is a method, but it is unclear how the authors gathered the quantitative information and what this information consisted of.

Discussion and Conclusion:

7. The authors seem too certain about the validity of the surveys considering the limits and lack of detail provided in the methods and results. More detailed methods and results will help ensure the appropriateness of the discussion and conclusion.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper, either now or in the future?
I received reimbursement for travel expenses for a meeting with CAHMI researchers held one year ago in order to discuss priorities for complementary medicine research.

Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper, either now or in the future?
no

Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?
no
Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript? no

Do you have any other financial competing interests? no

Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper? I have developed and partially validated a questionnaire assessing the use of complementary medicine for use in clinical and research pediatric settings. This may be perceived as competing interests.

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.