Reviewer’s report

Title: Complementary and Alternative Medicine use in pregnancy: results of a multinational study.

Version: 2 Date: 14 August 2013

Reviewer: paula gardiner

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory revisions

1. Recommend changing the title of the paper to HERB USE in pregnancy since that is the focus of the paper

Can the authors explain why they chose to include homeopathy in with "herbs"? Not all homeopathy is herbal and it seems like the focus of the paper is herbal medicine use.

3. This is a wonderful data set – congratulations on getting such a big sample size.

4. Please note that this is a secondary data base analysis.

5. Background section

Agree that herbal medicine is top used – rates of homeopathy vary from country to country.

Would recommend making 2 sentences to clarify that point.

6. Recommend separating you Herb use pregnancy references into region or country for example.

Specify region of world and the rates eg in Norway rates of herb use in preg are ...

.... Currently you have a list of 10 references some out of date and it is hard for the reader to understand your point that currently herb use rates vary from country to country.

7. Recommend keeping the focus on HERB use – not switching back to CAM.

8. Need to have a paragraph or sentence why homeopathy is different from herbal medicine and why do you think it is important that your paper report the prevalence for both. Or choose to take out the data on homeopathy all together.

9. The objective of your study is Herb and Homeopathy NOT CAM – please change first sentence in last paragraph before methods.

10. Looks like you have data on Pregnant and post partum women.

11. Please specify what the primary aim of the study was – was the study designed to collect herbal medicine use or is this a secondary data base.
analysis?
12. Third paragraph – please put verbatim exactly the question the women were asked on the questionnaires for herbs and homeopathy
13. DID you ask about other CAM use like acupuncture? If not be careful how you use the term CAM
14. Did you ask about non herbal supplements like fish oil and melatonin
15. Did you ask about multivitamins – I see folic acid – was that folic acid alone?
16. What did you do with combination products
17. All the methods refer to herbal medicine you do not mention questions for homeopathy – please add these
18. When you say herbal medicine was coded with a predetermined list – what do you mean was it based on latin name, common name, name of commerce, WHO monograph definition
19. What did you do with products that were multivitamins or non botanicals if they were included did the herb have to be >50% of the ingredients by weight ??? or in the top 5 ingredients on the list of ingredients?
20. If you had a product that had more than one herb – like a tea with chamomile, ginger, and peppermint your methods refer to the “top ingredient” or “order of presentation” on the list which would make it classified as chamomile – This is misleading to the read and does not truly represent the true prevalence as you are not counting second and third etc ingredients. Please add more description of what you did and why you classified them like that – was it teas, tinctures, or tablets. How many single ingredient products?
21 also please list web sites the you found the products – do you just use google or did you look them up on a database?
22. For homeopathy could they tell you what they used? How do you know if the homeopathy was not herbal based – if it is not herbal based how does it help to present this data
23. Would recommend the focus of the paper be HERBS not CAM as you did not specifically ask participants about this and it could underestimate the true prevalence
24. Why did you not do logistic regression for homeopathy users?

RESULTS
25. In your result sections- can you clarify how you know that women were using these specific latin species or are you assuming that they did – did they women write down the species for you in the result sections – there is much variability by country to country of common names
26/ Did the women write down their herbs in their own languages and then these were translated into English – did you then make an assumption that if they wrote chamomile that it was german chamomile how do you know if was not roman
chamomile? Perhaps you do not want to write the latin in the results section – you can put it in the discussion and say to the best of our knowledge these are the most common species that we think women use – you do know what species they used unless they tell you or you have the ingredient labels that list the species – this is an important part to address. Please do not report the latin name of the plant unless the participants told you

27. In results – please specify how many combination products you had and how many single herb products.

28. Recommend you take out the CAM prevalence this is not the focus of your paper

29. Discussion – Please reorganize the first paragraph with your main findings – next follow with the countries prevalence

30. Again it is fine to say what the latin name of the plant is – just say this is what we think the plant is but it is a limitation of the study

. Limitations not listed
Dependent on women to report herb's name - did not ask women to specify the latin name of the plant, did not ask about all ingredients in products, types of products _ teas tinctures (alcohol based) and tablets
Common names of plants are different in different countries
Duration of use of pants and did there use change when they went from pregnant to post partum

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest 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 interest