Author's response to reviews

Title: Positive patient experiences in an Australian integrative oncology center

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Version: 3 Date: 14 March 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
Author’s Response to Reviews

Title: Positive patient experiences in an Australian integrative oncology center

Authors:

Version: 3  Date: 13th March 2014

Author’s response to reviews: See over.
Reviewer's report
Title: Positive patient experiences in an Australian integrative oncology center
Version: 2 Date: 6 January 2014
Reviewer: Caroline Hoffman

Reviewer's report:
This revision seems substantial and seems to address the comments I made.

Minor essential revision:
On page 5 paragraph 3, line 4, I wonder whether that statements is correct as written. Do the authors mean perceived unpreparedness' rather than 'perceived preparedness'? The paragraph does not seem to make sense to me at present.

We thank the reviewer for their time and comment and revisions suggested above have been made in the manuscript.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests: No to all the questions above
Reviewer's report

Title: Positive patient experiences in an Australian integrative oncology center

Version: 1 Date: 4 September 2013

Reviewer: Elena Ladas

Reviewer's report:
This is a descriptive study that reported on 66 adult patients (predominantly female) with cancer undergoing treatment at a center providing integrative care for free. The authors report on reasons for use of CIT during cancer care. There are a number of major revisions that may be considered prior to considering this for acceptance:

We thank the reviewer for their time and we have endeavoured to address the revisions detailed below along with any formatting or grammatical errors in the manuscript. Please see below for a discussion of specific revisions.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The background does not provide a succinct overview of the problem and the gap in science that this paper closes. The introduction reads more like a review paper rather than the introduction to the results of a descriptive study. The authors should conclude with a summary paragraph describing the aims of the study rather than provide in bullet format.
   Amendments have been made in the text as suggested by the reviewer.

2. What percentage of patients “Participants were provided with a questionnaire to complete within one week and return directly to researchers via a reply paid envelope.” Did they do this on their own? There is no description in the number of surveys received vs. lost to follow up.
   The methods and results section have been amended to clarify the number of patients who were recruited into the study cohort (135) compared to those who chose to complete the questionnaire (66). Additionally, it has been highlighted in the manuscript that they completed the questionnaire independently.

3. The authors use the term evidence-informed. What does that mean?
   Evidence-informed refers to the use of expert consensus in the absence of published best-practice guidelines. An amendment with an example has been provided in the manuscript to highlight the difference.

4. Was the survey tool tested for reliability and validity? The authors briefly discuss the development of the tool but do not provide scientific evidence that it is a robust tool for scientific inquiry.
   The development of the questionnaire is detailed on page 8 of the manuscript. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a review of the literature and previous tools utilised was undertaken along with pilot testing and refinement of the tool used based on the experiences of patients of various treatment and disease stages.
   Specific reliability and validity statistics were not conducted as this was a pilot study using a newly developed instrument.

5. The results and discussion require significant revising. The results are limited with much of the information more relevant for the methods. At times, the discussion reads like the results more so than a discussion. The discussion
should compare and contrast the results of this study with previous work and identify areas for subsequent exploration or recommendations for clinical care of centers providing CIT. Individual patient responses may better be presented thematically rather than highlighting throughout the text in the discussion. Lastly, the discussion provides a review of topics that are not always necessary to the findings of the study. There are also statements in the discussion that are not supported by the data within the study but are also not referenced. An example is the statement below: “Additionally, a stress response is linked to acute and long term neurophysiological changes resulting in further symptoms of distress, as well as negatively affecting cognition and coping skills. In turn, active coping strategies are associated with lower cortisol levels and improved wellbeing[24]” – Is reference 24 for the last sentence or the entire paragraph?

Following the comments from the reviewer and editors, the manuscript has been significantly reformatted into separate results and discussions, along with amendments relating to missing references.

6. The quotes from patients are interesting but are not placed in the discussion. These should be presented in the results and referred to in the discussion in terms of the significance of the findings.

As stated above the manuscript has been reformatted with quotes now located in the separate results section.

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

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

The manuscript has been reformatted and reviewed by all authors to ensure a readability, along with correction of any formatting, spelling or grammatical errors.

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