Reviewer’s report

Title: Positive patient experiences in an Australian integrative oncology center

Version: 1 Date: 4 September 2013

Reviewer: Elena Ladas

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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 us of CIT during cancer care. There are a number of major revisions that may be considered prior to considering this for acceptance:

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 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.

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.

3) The authors use the term evidence-informed. What does that mean?

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.

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?
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.

**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

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