Reviewer's report

Title: The interface with naturopathy in rural primary health care: A survey of referral practices of general practitioners in rural and regional New South Wales, Australia

Version: 2 Date: 8 April 2014

Reviewer: Antony Porcino

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Many changes have been made that clarify a number of the issues raised, and the manuscript is easier to interpret and assimilate as a whole.

I no longer have the impression of an unexamined intrinsic bias toward naturopathy. My preference remains for more complete statistical reporting, but as the authors note, bare reporting generally remains acceptable—this remains as an author discretion.

- Minor Essential Revisions
1) While the results presented in Table 4, last item “Professional relationship with CAM provider” seem clear, the description in the Results section is not: “GPs who did not have an existing professional relationship with a CAM practitioner were 3.03 (95% CI: 1.53, 6.25) times as likely to refer to a naturopath more than once per month than those who had no pre-existing relationship with another CAM practitioner.” The two compared groups seem the same. Do you just need to change “had no pre-existing relationship” to “had a pre-existing…”?

- Discretionary Revisions
1) Please be careful in the use of the term significant, particularly if exact numbers are not provided. For example, in the second and final paragraphs of the Background, there are three instances each, which may or may not be implying the same thing, and some may imply statistical significance. In the 2nd Background paragraph, 10 – 15% regular use of naturopathy becomes “significant levels of utilization” in the final Background and final Conclusion paragraphs, which is an interpretation that could be managed more effectively with precise language. In the 2nd paragraph of Results, 48.8% is significant. While this flexible use of significant may be commonly done in publications, it allows for broad interpretation of meaning by readers, and precision in the language would substantially reduce the possibility of interpreting some statements or the authors as having an intrinsic or languaged bias of interpretation of what is meant whenever significant is used.

2) In the Discussion, 4th paragraph, there is mention of the results regarding decreased referral rates to naturopaths when a professional relationship with a CAM practitioner exists; the 6th paragraph discusses how small community
dynamics may increase referrals due to increased interactions with CAM providers. While the final line of paragraph 6 allows for further exploration of this awkward dynamic, and the two concepts are not mutually exclusive or opposite, I’m wondering if the authors have any additional insight into this issue.

3) 2nd to last paragraph in the Discussion: when discussing the limitation when comparing the sample population with Australian demographics generally, could you please confirm if you are comparing with national rural and regional statistics or the “broader Australian general practice population” (i.e., including urban).

4) Copyediting: Second sentence of the final discussion paragraph has some grammatical and missing word issues. The rest of the manuscript seems fine.

**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:**

I declare that I have no competing interests