Reviewer’s report

Title: Complementary therapy use among breast cancer patients during chemotherapy

Version: 1 Date: 17 June 2014

Reviewer: Trine Stub

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This manuscript requires major compulsory revision before publication.

Introduction: The introduction should be revised, and the definitions used by the World Health Organization (WHO) should be applied. The definitions of CT and alternative medicine (AB) are confusing and incorrect. AB is defined as a part of CAM and is not used instead of conventional medicine, but often alongside conventional medicine. The difference between CAM and CT is unclear. I think it is better to use the term Integrative Medicine instead of CT.

In addition, Traditional Medicine needs to be properly defined.

It would be helpful to have more information regarding the use of CAM in Malaysia. Please add data from previous research regarding CAM in the Malaysian population.

Please modify this statement: “CT is relatively taboo in conventional medicine”. This is not the situation in Western countries. Please explain and differentiate between western countries and Malaysia, if the situation is different in Malaysia.

The statement “CT may increase side-effect and toxicity of conventional medicine”. This statement needs modification. However, if there are some herbs or CAM therapies specific to the area (Malaysia), please provide an example with references.

The objective of the study is well defined.

Methods:

Please add the following:

How was the patients recruited to the study? Please provide a flow chart for the inclusion process of the participants in the study.

Please state exactly: Exclusion criteria for the participants.

Instrumentation: Please add the exact questions used in the questionnaire regarding the use of CAM and reasons for using CAM in a table.

Power calculation should be added under “statistical methods”.

Results:
It is not a common understanding that “Prayer” and “Exercise” are considered CAM. I suggest that you report CAM on more than one level. For example in accordance with the NAFKAM model on reporting CAM, see “Kristoffersen AE, Fønnebø V, Norheim AJ. Use of complementary and alternative medicine among patients: classification criteria determine level of use”.

It would be interesting to see if the findings remain the same when prayer and exercise are excluded from the analysis.

The result: CT users were more likely to adhere to chemotherapy schedules (vs chemotherapy schedule ever delayed) [OR 4.96, 95% CI 1.88-13.15] should be interpreted with caution, since the CI is relatively wide.

Table 2: “on time” should be replaced with “during chemotherapy”.

Discussion:
I suggest that the discussion is revised according to the following subheadings:
1. A few sentences to sum up your findings
2. Bias considerations
3. Comparison with other studies in the field
4. Implications for practice and further research

Conclusion:
Should be revised according to the aims of the study.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests’