Reviewer's report

Title: Herbal Use Among Urban Multiethnic Primary Care Patients: A Cross-Sectional Survey

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Reviewer: Robert Rhyne

Reviewer's report:

General
In general, prevalence of herbal use is not a new question; what makes this study different is that it is performed in a practice based research network.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Results do not state total sample size, and table 1 total of 323 is different from total of 327 stated in abstract.

2. Table 4 shows a lower CI for the first interaction term to be 3. Is it 0.30?

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. In background, 7th line states a 380% increase in one year. Is this a typo?

2. Methods: Does health insurance include Medicaid patients, all forms of insurance, or is it just private insurance?

3. There is no description of how the convenience sample was collected at the various PBRN sites. Was the method the same at all practices?

4. In some studies, Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Whites show a difference in their use of herbs. Is there sufficient justification for lumping these two ethnicities in the analysis? (See J Am Pharm Assoc. 2000;40:359-65, and Pharmacotherapy 2003;23:526 – 32 for difference in elderly Hispanic use in one study in the southwestern US)

5. Table 3 shows that less than high school has larger percentage of herbal users than any other category, but the authors state that higher education is associated with herbal use. Can the authors explain this?

6. The average reader cannot understand how the final logistic model was constructed, especially when there were so many predictors in table 3 that were found to be statistically significant. Can the authors explain in more understandable language how the reasoning follows from the testing of all the two-way interactions to arriving at the final model? Would it be useful to report the odds ratios from the logistic model for the significant predictor variables that were significant, before (or after) adding the interaction terms? I would suggest that a statistician review this article before publication.

9. The sample size for Asian participants is very low. How could this affect the results, especially in a
convenience sample? Many cells in the tables are low or zero. How do the results change if this ethnic group is excluded?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Immigrant family history is a difficult concept to understand because all non-Native Americans have immigrant family history. Please explain this variable further. Does it mean recent immigrants?

Which journal?: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of importance in its field

What next?: Accept for publication in BMC Medicine after minor essential revisions

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

None