Reviewer's report

Title: Expertise About Herbs and Dietary Supplements among Diverse Health Professionals

Version: 1 Date: 12 March 2006

Reviewer: Remy Coeytaux

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1) I think that a brief discussion about the interaction between gender and the observed outcomes would be useful and informative. Two aspects about gender are especially noteworthy: 1) only 25% of respondents were male; and 2) female gender was an independent predictor of greater knowledge about HDS. The latter is an important and informative finding, if that particular result is valid. Might there have been a differential self-selection process by gender? In other words, if males were more or less likely than females to participate in this study if they knew (or didn’t know) something about HDS, the findings might be somewhat biased. It is certainly possible, however, that inherent bias acted in the direction that resulted in an under-estimate of the extent to which females were more knowledgeable than their male counterparts. Either way, I think that the apparent validity of the observed gender differences, as well as the implications of that finding for educational and training purposes, warrants a bit more discussion,

2) The authors might consider mentioning that their data suggest that secular or generation trends do not easily account for the differences in knowledge scores by level of training. The fact that practicing health professionals scored higher than students in their respective fields suggests that those professionals acquired some knowledge about HDS as part of their profession. This is in contrast to an alternative explanation (not supported by the authors’ data) that individuals entering one of the four health professions studied entered the profession knowledge that their teachers didn’t have (which may be the case for certain complementary or alternative practices).

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.