Reviewer's report

Title: Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among US Navy and Marine Corps Personnel

Version: 1 Date: 9 February 2007

Reviewer: marja verhoef

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General

This is well conducted survey, that goes beyond bivariate analyses and used multivariable analysis. Nice features are the reliability check and the inclusion of other therapies used in the figure. It is relatively old (2000-2002).

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

- In the discussion it is stated (or strongly implied) that a survey is done to assess potential risk or benefits. Use in itself is not enough to assess that, as additional information would be needed about allopathic medicine use as well as details of CAM use, such as product quality, dose etc. While the authors seem to recognize this, it needs to be reworded. A survey is only a very basic beginning. Similarly the abstract states that because CAM may conflict with allopathic therapy, we should capture CAM use. Again this not enough, we should assess CAM and allopathic medicine use.
- The study implications are fairly general and similar to what most surveys conclude, it would be helpful to be more specific, what kind of guidelines, are such guidelines already in place, and how should we do future research?
- Percentages should be calculated differently in Table 2: for example: the percentage of CAM users amongst males is 338/1009= 33%, and among women it is 147/296=49.6%. In fact what the table now seems to show is that women have a lower percentage of use than men.

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

- The discussion states that prevalence and beliefs need to be studied to assess risks or benefit. It is not clear that beliefs were not addressed in this study.
- The discussion states that prevalence and beliefs need to be studied to assess risks or benefit. It is not clear that beliefs were not addressed in this study.
- The presentation of the logistic regression should be clarified: note that the dependent variable is CAM use, yes or no. This dichotomization is a reduction of the information the authors have (ie could have used number of CAMs) and that should be noted. In the discussion on page 8 it is not very clear why service branch, occupational category etc. should be removed from the model. This needs clarification.
- Given that agreement for satisfaction with physicians was low, the fact that this variable is significant, should be considered carefully.
- The discussion speaks about trends, this cannot be concluded based on a cross-sectional study.
- On page 5 CAM is described as practitioner-assisted, self administered and use of dietary supplements and diet programs. On page 6 it states that CAM excludes lifestyle diets. This could be clarified.
- Page 8 line 7, should be bivariate and not univariate as two variables are included in these analyses.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

- Is column 2 in table 1 really needed? Maybe column 1 is not needed either, as this is described in the text.
- The use of unmanaged, unconventional and unregulated at the end of page 3 is somewhat confusing. Given the definition (or description) used in the paper it is all CAM.
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

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