Reviewer's report

Title: Consumers' influence on pharmacists' professional responsibilities with respect to natural health products: A Study of Focus Groups

Version: 1 Date: 13 May 2008

Reviewer: Maree Simpson

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Review - 'Consumers' influence on pharmacists' professional responsibilities with respect to natural health products: A Study of Focus Groups'

BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine

I really enjoyed this paper and would suggest only one discretionary revision - I would include a brief sentence about ethical issues such as data storage and confidentiality. It is apparent that individuals are NOT identified but I always think it is prudent to be very upfront about ethical issues, and differential impacts on different ethnic groups or indigenous groups, as applicable.

When assessing the work, please consider the following points:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The question posed is a significant one for current and future practice, It is not only clearly defined but the methodology and results report outcomes consistent with the question posed.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The focus group methodology is appropriate to elicit opinions of both consumers and of pharmacists. The recruitment and conduct of the groups was also effective, as was the thematic analysis.

3. Are the data sound?
The quantitative socio-demographic data appear to be reported appropriately and to be consistent with expectations of pharmacists, and of focus groups. The rich data reported from focus group participants appears to be authentic – there is different word and sentence structure which would be anticipated from different participants with potentially different educational levels.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
I am uncertain whether human ethics approval is required in Canada for research of this type or whether consent is considered to be implied by participation. The advantage of a very brief discussion of ethical issues is that it usually addresses issues of confidentiality and/or anonymity as well as data storage and disposition in the longer term.

Certainly, the reporting of the data is quite appropriate and to accepted
standards.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussion section of the paper referred the reader to the professional literature for consideration of potentially relevant theories or hypotheses, highlighting similarities or differences as noted.

After reading the paper, the conclusions are self-evident based on the results reported.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Whilst no sub-section or heading titled “Limitations of the study” is present, nonetheless there is a paragraph devoted to issues of generalisability.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

The authors do clearly cite other work relevant to this study either as predecessor studies or for studies that have informed the methodology.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

To my perception, the title and abstract are consistent with each other and with the results reported, accepting the space/word limits imposed.

9. Is the writing acceptable?

The writing is in the traditional academic format and standard journal style.

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