Reviewer's report

Title: A scoping review of research regarding CAM and mass media: Looking back, moving forward

Version: 1 Date: 18 April 2008

Reviewer: Deborah Sharp

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Major compulsory revisions

1. I have a major problem with this piece of research. It is the convoluted nature of the process and thus its validity that concerns me. As far as I can discern, the path that has been followed is thus: media articles on CAM have been the focus of research studies which have then been the focus of a scoping review. The authors describe a scoping study as not so very different to a systematic review but with a broader window on events. However in terms of accepting the validity of the results of this current review, one has to take an enormous leap of faith regarding the original media sources (mainly newspaper and magazines) in terms of the content, accuracy, etc ie overall quality of the reporting. If these media pieces are questionable in their validity and reliability, which I think they might well be, then it is very difficult to apply scientific standards to those pieces and the research papers analysing those pieces.

2. The objectives of the study do not in fact include the quality of the research activity

3. It is very unclear as to exactly which CAM modalities are included. Natural health products and CAM in general are quoted as comprising the majority of attention. Much more detail is required.

4. The authors decided that 16 articles were appropriate for the quality assessment but that only eight were to be included in the full review. However in a number of places in the results section it appears that more than the 8 articles were being considered. From ‘Descriptive summary of research regarding CAM and mass media’ subheading this should only refer to the 8 quality papers.( note under types of CAM, n=9)

5. From 8 very diverse papers, it seems that the first sentence of the discussion is overstated. Although a vast number of papers were searched, only 8 were included in the review. They are very diverse in nature and I would suggest quality. Given the large base (n=4454) of the media outputs I am not certain that any of the statements are robust.

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

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