Reviewer's report

Title: Animal-based remedies as complementary medicine among people in semi-arid region, NE Brazil

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Reviewer: Ulysses Albuquerque

Reviewer's report:

The paper’s idea is very interesting, but it must be strongly revised. The topic studied is extremely interesting and very current. I feel that the data are good and that the topic of the manuscript is appropriate for BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine. However, the text was written in a very descriptive manner. A lot of information not only is needed not only to improve its quality as an ethnozoological study, but for its overall scientific quality. In the present work, the authors build all their argumentation based on interviews with questions that, in a fist moment seem to be adequate, but they are not enough for an objective evaluation.

• In my view, the introduction needs enrichment by means of citations from the literature in order to adequately provide a base and justification for the questions and/or hypothesis tested. It is well written, but not adequately prepares the reader for the questions proposed. Thus, I recommend that the authors improve the theoretical background in relation to the hypotheses/problems they brings up – based on the literature; they should explain the scenario used to construct the investigation’s scenario.

• I also recommend a detailed characterization of the area and “social group” (including medical system) studied. The information offered is not sufficient for the reader to create a biological and cultural mental scenario of the object investigated. The methods section is not sufficiently clear and, in my vision, more problematic. Several doubts came up while reading this section. The methods of data acquisition are a little vague, but probably acceptable. Please, revise.

• In general way, the results and discussion are poor and very descriptive. What is lacking here is a general theoretical framework. In my view, more quantitative analysis is necessary. For example, diversity indices (Begossi, 1999) may be useful to compare animal diversity between others localities in NE Brazil. In the same way, also is interesting a deep analysis of therapeutical indications. Please, a discussion about the use of zootherapy as complementary medicine in NE Brazil is also necessary.

Final comments: I believe the authors had a good idea and I thus recommend that revise the text, especially the data collection methods, sampling, and improve the data analysis with quantitative tools. I hope these comments can be useful. Please, also revise the English text.
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.