Reviewer’s report

Title: Prevalence of Complementary and Alternative Medicine use in Children with Chronic Health Conditions in Lagos, Nigeria

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Reviewer: andrew S Day

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The manuscript by Oshikoya and colleagues describes the patterns of the use of Complementary and Alternative Medicines (CAM) by children in Nigeria.

General Comment:
There is much interest and focus upon the use of CAM around the world, reflecting the increasing use of these products in children and adults. This study provides a clear insight into the use of CAM by three groups of Nigerian children with chronic disease states and illustrates key aspects of the use of CAM in this area of the world. The study conclusions raised by the authors (that this usage pattern specifically reflects the presence of a control disease) should be considered in the light of the lack of a control group of well children with no chronic (or acute) diseases. This would have provided an important contrast to the data provided in this manuscript.

Specific Comments:
1. The goals of the study should be the same in the Abstract and the Introduction: one only mentions looking for adverse effects and the other lists only looking for the benefits of CAM.
2. In the abstract and elsewhere it is stated that the administration of CAM was ceased six months prior to the study in a sub-group of children. The wording of this should be revised: currently it sounds like these children all ceased their CAM therapy exactly six months ago!
3. In the Abstract it is stated that CAM were used alone or “in combination with others”. This should be rephrased, as it is unclear what is meant by “others”- is this other CAM agents or other prescribed medications?
4. It is interesting that none of the parents disclosed to their medical staff that their child was receiving CAM: was this because none of the doctors had asked? This is an important aspect of the use of CAM, especially in children. Is CAM a topical subject in Nigeria? Are there specific cultural aspects that may influence this?
5. On page 5 it is stated that one agent is “very effective” for a certain condition: however in the next sentence it is stated that there is no RCT data to support this. The authors should qualify or revise the use of the term “very effective”.
6. Information about the days on which the clinics are held is not relevant to the
data provided in the manuscript.

7. In the description of the questionnaire, it is stated that there were four sections: however, the authors only describe sections A, B and C. This should be clarified or corrected.

8. The children were all aged less than 12 years: does this reflect the practice of this hospital/health service? Most paediatric units would look after children until the end of school or adolescence. This may reflect the CAM usage patterns (as this population is likely all pre-pubertal).

9. In the results it is stated that the means of the ages were not different. It is assumed that this refers to the mean ages of the three disease groups: this should be made more clear.

10. The word “relief” should be corrected to read “relieve” (or “relief of”) on page 9 (paragraph 4, line 3).

11. The authors discuss the benefits of the structured interview, but certain aspects were not clear: in particular, was the precisely same text used to ask the parents about CAM by each interviewer? Were parents provided with lists of potential CAM therapies? How were they prompted as to what might be seen as CAM and what might not?

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

**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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'