Reviewer’s report

Title: The use of biomedicine, complementary and alternative medicine, and ethnomedicine for the treatment of epilepsy among people of South Asian origin in the UK

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Reviewer: Sarah Gehlert

Reviewer’s report:

Title: A qualitative study of the health-seeking behaviours of people of South Asian origin in the UK with a diagnosis of epilepsy—biomedicine, complementary and alternative medicine and ethnomedicine

Research article

Description: This article seeks to understand the use of CAM and ethnomedical treatment for epilepsy among a group of South Asian patients obtained from epilepsy registers and hospital data bases in Leeds and Bradford. Inclusion criteria were age 18 years of age and older and listed in the epilepsy registry or hospital data bases as having epilepsy. South Asian origin was determined using a computer programme to review names. The authors tell us that 139 people met the study’s inclusion criteria. Thirty people with epilepsy and 15 caregivers made up the final study sample.

Critique: In general, the authors have successfully addressed previous comments. Some differences of opinion linger, which likely are largely philosophical, about methods of qualitative interviewing. The authors did not state the specific qualitative method that they were following (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology), making the process that they followed somewhat difficult to review.

Minor Discretionary Revisions:

The authors responded to reviewers’ concerns about reliability of interview data by commenting that: (1) interviewers were experienced in the techniques of qualitative research and (2) interviews were guided by topic guides to ensure that the same basic topics were raised in each interview. The threat of drift from a topic guide is real and never completely ameliorated by training. Fidelity in using a topic guide is a real issue that should be assessed to ensure that, in the authors’ own words, the same basic topics were raised in each interview.

I asked for some systematic review of a sample of the recorded transcripts to be undertaken. The authors commented that drift can prove to be a rich source of data. While I agree with this, i.e. the ability to probe and follow a participant’s train of thought, it is still necessary to maintain a systematic
overview of the process. This allows the kernel that the authors have identified a priori to be pursued, while at the same time allowing new avenues to be explored.

The authors address the possible effect on results of jointly interviewing patients and caregivers. They should explain in the text why joint interviews occurred.

Overall assessment: The information in this article is very interesting and potentially important for practice. For all intents and purposes, non-biomedical treatment for epilepsy has only been given serious consideration in the literature in the past decade. The authors gained some valuable insights about how decisions are made to use non-biomedical treatments. It is also quite interesting that CAMs are used so infrequently.

**What next?:** Accept without revision

**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.