Author’s response to reviews

Title: The potential of complementary and alternative medicine in promoting well-being and critical health literacy: a prospective, observational study of shiatsu

Authors:

Andrew F Long (a.f.long@leeds.ac.uk)

Version: 2 Date: 8 June 2009

Author’s response to reviews: see over
Responses to the Reviewers’ Comments

The two reviewers have provided helpful additional data, other references and material to include and comments on the article. This has led to the addition of material related to areas identified by the reviewers and further ideas on areas of further research. Below I indicate how their specific suggestions have been addressed.

Reviewer: Søren Ventegodt

1. The reviewer helpfully draws attention to the issue of side effects from mind-body medicine, referring to: Vickers & Zollmann (1999), relating to massage; Sobel (2000), a more general editorial review; and Ventegodt & Merrick (2009), a systematic review of side-effects of non-drug medicine, including mind-body medicine. As these studies are either more specific (massage) or more general, the issue of the safety of shiatsu (as an energy and mind-body therapy) is explicitly referenced in relation to a separate publication arising from the core shiatsu study.

2. The issue of outcomes of CAM is important. In this paper, drawn from a wider study, focus lies on exploring the area of advice giving and taking, centred on changes made, within a wider context of the overall perceived benefits from receiving shiatsu. The importance of specific measures to address aspects of the derived model is also identified as an area for further study.

3. A link of the findings to the work of Antonovsky - the concept of sense of coherence in relation to the mind-body dimension (following up on earlier mention of his work in the introduction, and addition of other material relating to holism and salutogenesis) - is introduced in the discussion section (‘shiatsu and advice giving’ section) and as an area for further research. Specific attention is also drawn with the text to the findings related to hopes for ‘personal development’ and changes in ‘mind/body awareness’ (indicated in Boxes 2 and 3).

4. Building on the existing material on a more egalitarian practitioner-client relationship, other research on empathy (following comments from reviewer 2) has been added into the discussion to reinforce this aspect and thus address, if tangentially, the question of the expert view and its potential disempowering effect. This issue has also been pointed to as one requiring further research. It should be noted that the data presented in the paper do not suggest disempowerment, but rather engagement (with the advice giving), enhanced awareness of mind/body and thus a move to greater control and perceived self-efficacy.

Reviewer: Iris R Bell

1. Material have been added to address the issue of possible inter-country differences; in particular, related to the recruited practitioners (findings) and to point to the consistency of the findings across countries and remaining potential of practitioner variation (practitioners in different stages of their own personal growth) (discussion).

2. The useful suggestions on additional citations have been followed through, in relation to ‘openness to experience’, ‘empathy’ and ‘self-efficacy’.

3. The discussion of the issue of social desirability has been extended to address the point raised, and a suggestion made about the possibility of including a measure to explore this possibility in future studies.

4. The importance of exploring the meaning of perceived self-efficacy is highlighted as one of a number of areas for further research.