Author's response to reviews

Title: Knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding gemstone therapeutics in a selected adult population in Pakistan

Authors:

   Sidra Ishaque (sidraishaque@gmail.com)
   Taimur Saleem (taimur@gmail.com)
   Waris Qidwai (waris.qidwai@aku.edu)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
We thank the reviewer for her valuable comments on our manuscript. We also appreciate the time she has given to help us improve the article further. We have tried our level best to rectify all the points mentioned by the reviewer in her comprehensive report. We hope that all the revisions have been sufficiently addressed.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. As per my previous review I have significant concerns about the substantial use of non-peer reviewed or other high quality sources in the paper. Only 13 of the 27 cited references are from journals with the bulk of the listed references from popular websites, online gemstone communities. These sites typically provide no reference lists or other evidence to support their claims. I appreciate that this may be an area where there is little or no scientific or medical literature
however I would have been more convinced about the context and rationale for the study if authoritative texts on traditional and folk medical practices and gemstone/crystal healing had been consulted rather than popular websites. I feel that the Introduction still needs considerable rewriting to conform to the normal conventions of scientific writing.

**Author’s reply:** We are grateful that you acknowledge the difficulty we faced in the pursuit of more authoritative texts on the subject. Online gemstone communities and popular websites are present in abundance on the internet; this in itself shows the following that gemstones therapy has garnered among some users. While we agree that the websites cited may not be entirely credible as you mentioned; under the circumstances they provide important material on the topic of gemstones and some of them have been used for reference. Nevertheless, in the light of your review, we have revised the introduction; making it more concise to conform to the normal conventions of scientific writing. We have tried to cite lesser number of websites. Currently 7 out of our 22 references [31.8%] are web-based; compared to 13 out of 27 references [48.2%] being web based previously. We have tried to incorporate more authoritative texts (e.g book references) this time around.

2. The authors have not addressed my earlier comment regarding the nature of the participants in this study. As they were all attending a health clinic it is reasonable to assume that they have a health issue for which they are seeking treatment. This information is important in understanding why they use
particular gemstones may be more prevalent than others, whether this group is representative of the wider population and whether they are using gemstones for cosmetic or healing reasons.

**Author’s reply:** This has been addressed in great detail in the Strengths and Limitations section now. While the questionnaire doesn’t have any formal mention of enquiry about the exact reason for gemstone use; we distinctly recall that during the interviews, many of the patients gave the impression of usage of gemstones for health rather than citing any cosmetic reasons. We have mentioned this. Findings from our sample can certainly be generalized to a wider population; we have addressed how that is possible in the same section as well.

3. The revised material in the section entitles Chi square test results would be enhanced by inclusion of all data where statistical comparisons are made. Just presenting the p value without knowing what the values being compared are makes it very difficult for the reader to know which is the higher/greater value of the parameters being compared

**Author’s Reply:** In the last revision of our manuscript, we had not completely understood this point and we had therefore simply elaborated more on the p values in the text. However, in this revision we have worked on improving the Chi Square section in the light of your comments by inclusion of data. Tables have been added in this section instead of simply stating p values.
Minor Essential Revisions

1. Remove the phrase ‘cross-sectional study’ from the Abstract

Author’s Reply: (This phrase has been removed now)

2. Add the name of the country to the Abstract rather than saying ‘in a developing country’

Author’s Reply: (The name of the country has been added; the phrase “in a developing country” has been removed.)

3. Statements such as “aspirin was obtained …. but is now hailed as a mainstream wonder drug” should be removed or rewritten so that they are less sensationalist. Also this statement is attributed to reference 14, yet there is no mention of aspirin or willow bark on this website.

Author’s reply: (This has been removed; we apologize for the oversight of the reference and sensationalist impression that such a statement was giving.)

4. Sources are required for the material which has been added on page 7 - paragraph starting “Pakistan currently …”

Author’s Reply: (Reference for this has been added)
5. There should be consistent use of decimals – in some places the percentages are rounded to whole numbers while in others they are given to one decimal place.

Author’s Reply: (This has been addressed; all percentages in the text have been rounded to whole numbers using the standard mathematical rules because we felt that readers are better able to grasp and retain a memory of the whole numbers rather than decimals.)

- Discretionary Revisions

1. Suggest removing paragraph at the bottom of page 4 starting “A stroll down …” as it does not contribute to the topic of the paper (i.e. “gemstones for healing”)

Author’s reply: (We agree with this comment. We have therefore addressed this discretionary revision as well. This paragraph has been removed from the Introduction)