Reviewer’s report

Title: Knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding gemstone therapeutics in a selected adult population: A cross sectional survey

Version: 1 Date: 8 October 2008

Reviewer: Jenny Wilkinson

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I suggest that you remove the phrase ‘a cross-sectional survey” from the title as it doesn’t really add anything. The population from which respondents were recruited were a sub-set of the whole population and this is conveyed by the word ‘selected’ in the title

2. Much of the material here is based on website rather than medical or scientific literature and while I understand the authors’ difficulty in finding literature on this topic I felt that there was insufficient differentiation between the unsubstantiated claims presented on websites and work from peer-review sources. For example, at the end of page 6 there is a statement that gemstones prevent hair loss yet the source for this information is from an online magazine article. I suggest that the background be revised such that is clear which information is based on traditional use, general and popular websites and magazines and the peer-reviewed literature.

3. I’m not sure that I agree with the authors’ statement that CAM is primarily rooted in Eastern cultures and this is certainly not a finding supported by the cited reference (Astin 1998).

4. Overall the background section could be considerably shortened to provide a more succinct introduction to gemstone therapy and to this study. I would have also liked to have known more about gemstone therapies in the context of the traditional medicine in Pakistan.

5. The authors do not mention whether institutional ethics approval was granted for this study.

6. It is not clear why the authors elected to use attendees at a hospital clinic. This should also be addressed in the limitations section.

7. I suggest referring to the individuals involved in the research as participants or respondents rather than patients.

8. It is unclear why the questionnaire was focused on gall stones and renal stones. Is this the primary use of gemstones in traditional medicine?

9. As 400 of 465 individuals completed the survey the response rate is 86% not 90%

10. Where p values are quotes as p=0.000 is this really 0 or is this p<0.0001?
11. The presentation of the results is a little hard to follow and it would be helpful to the reader if the data relating to p values was included in the text rather than just giving the p value alone.

12. Figure 1 – what is the difference between media and newspapers?

13. I don’t think you need both frequency and % data – given the overall n and % any reader can work out the number of responses for any category

14. Table 1- please provide standard deviations for the mean age in years data

15. I found Tables 5 & 6 a bit hard to follow as it wasn’t clear what they specifically related to. Also CI is given below the tables but not confidence interval data seems to be given in the table

16. The description in the supplementary file refers to giving bad news to patients – how does this fit with gemstone therapy?

17. There are some grammatical and other errors and the authors should avoid using terms such as ‘sizable majority’.

18. Given that all participants were attending a clinic it would have been useful to know why they were there are whether there was a correlation between their health problem and use of gemstones. It would have also have been useful to know if these individuals used other traditional or complementary therapies for their health.

19. The statement that medical doctors now recognise gemstone therapy as an important healing art should be removed unless this can be supported by reference to the literature rather than a commercial website selling gemstones.

Minor Essential Revisions

nil

Discretionary Revisions

nil

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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