Reviewer's report

Title: Use Of Complementary And Alternative Medicine: A survey In Turkish Gastroenterology Patients

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Reviewer: Heather Boon

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. This paper reports on the prevalence of CAM use in patients with GI problems in Turkey and identifies some factors associated with this use. CAM use in this specific sub-set of Turkish individuals has not been described before; however, CAM use in those with GI problems has been described in other countries and CAM use in other Turkish patient populations (esp cancer) has been described previously. I would like to see some justification for the need for this study – is there any reason to believe that Turkish individuals with GI problems are somehow different than individuals with GI problems from other countries? Or is there a need to identify the CAM products Turkish patients are using for some specific reason (e.g., education of MDs or policy change)? We know that all types of patients all over the world are using CAM and it seems pointless to continue to survey different sub-sets of the population simply to get a specific percentage which is within a the same general range almost everywhere. I believe that if we continue to do these kinds of CAM prevalence studies they must serve a purpose beyond simply providing a prevalence rate -- what was the reason in this case? Why did the authors want to know about CAM use?

2. Overall, the paper needs a good English edit – there are a number of grammatical errors throughout and although they do not generally interfere with understanding the content presented, they are distracting.

3. Abstract:
The authors state that there is a “significant difference in education level between users and non-users of CAM” but do not state the direction – are more or less educated individuals more likely to use CAM?

4. Introduction:
This section provides background information about what is known about the use of CAM in GI patients and CAM use in Turkey, but it is not clear from what countries/cultures the statistics are derived. Please be specific i.e., about where the GI CAM use data are from. This may be helpful to make an argument about why these findings may not be applicable to Turkey which is why this study is needed. Similarly, why do the authors think previous findings of CAM use in Turkish patients can’t be extrapolated to Turkish GI patients? I do not currently see a good justification for doing this study.
5. Materials and Methods

a. What kind of sampling was done? Was every patient during the recruitment phase approached? Only selected patients? Was it a random sample or a consecutive sample or something else?

b. How was the sample size chosen? Did the author continue to collect data until you reached a target number (and if so how was that determined)? Or did the author simply collect as many responses as possible within a specific time period (and how was that determined)?

c. How many people that were asked to participate refused? So how many people had to be asked to participate in order to get the 216 responses?

d. Did participants rate their satisfaction and perceived effectiveness of CAM in general or were these ratings made for each CAM therapy/product they reported using?

e. Was the list of specific herbs/supplements provided to patients to choose from and if so, how was this list chosen? Were participants able to add things to the list that they used if those items were not included originally on the list?

6. Results

a. The following statement is not clear: “Of 8 (10.1%) patients used more than one method and of 18 patients (22.8%) are still using more than one method” – does the author mean 10.1% of those that used CAM used more than one thing? And does the first part of the sentence refer to “ever used” and the second part of the sentence refer to current use? If so, how can the current use percentage be greater than the “ever used” percentage as the “ever used” percentage would by definition include current use?

b. The statement “Usage frequency was mostly 1-2 glass/times a day” requires some explanation. Prior to this statement the author refers to CAM methods as diverse as Ayurveda, support groups, and herbal teas --- how can you report frequency like this that is supposed to apply to all these different things? The statement is so general that it has no meaning.

c. In the second paragraph, the first sentence says constipation was the 2nd most common reason for use and the 3rd sentence says constipation was the most common reason for use which is confusing. By looking at Table 2, I see that constipation and diarrhea are listed as both symptoms and diseases which I also find confusing. Please clarify the difference here.

d. The author reports “mean satisfaction with CAM” – I struggle to find meaning in this statistic especially for those using multiple products/methods.

e. The author states that marital status and education level were significantly associated with CAM use, but he does not tell us in the text which direction.

f. Table 5 – the percentages in this table are calculated incorrectly. In order to be useful, we need to know the percentage of females in the CAM user group and the percentage of females in the non-user group so we can see which percentage is higher (i.e., percentages calculated down the column). The
percentages are currently provided across the rows which is not helpful.

7. Discussion
a. The first line of the discussion describes this as a prospective study of CAM – how is it prospective? It appears to be a cross-sectional survey to me. Or perhaps I am missing something.
b. This study found a lower incidence of CAM use than other studies of CAM use in Turkish patients with other types of chronic disease and the author notes that this cohort was actually more educated than others. This would suggest, based on the finding from this study that higher education is associated with CAM use, that the CAM rate should be higher. How might this apparent contradiction be explained?
c. In paragraph 3 the study findings are compared with CAM use in the American population and the author suggests this study’s findings might be lower because of an age effect. But to make this argument, wouldn’t it be more correct to compare this study’s findings to other samples of GI patients? ---- I would argue that having a chronic condition vs being a member of the general public is far more likely to impact one’s use of CAM than age. In this study the multivariate analysis did not show age to be significantly associated with CAM use.
d. The first full paragraph on page 11 provides lots of statistics from other studies, but I don’t see any direct links to the findings in this study – are these the same or different than the findings from this study? How do they help explain this study’s findings?
e. The 2nd full paragraph on page 11 appears to present new results which should be provided in the results section and not here in the discussion.
f. The first sentence on page 12 begins with the words “These differences are likely to reflect ….” – it is not clear what differences are being referred to.
g. The author notes that he found a lower rate of herbal therapy use than has been found in other studies of Turkish patients – what might explain that finding?
h. Limitations: How similar was the group of participants to GI patients in Turkey in general with respect to demographics? How generalizable do might the findings be? How might the sampling strategy have affected the findings (assuming this was not a random sample)?

8. Conclusions: I think it would be helpful to see more specific conclusions actually stating the prevalence of use since that was a key purpose of the study.

Minor Essential Revisions
None.

Discretionary Revisions
9. Results: I don’t normally see Coenzyme Q10 described as a CAM method at the same levels as Ayurveda, or meditation – isn’t it simply a supplement as opposed to a distinct method?
10. Some suggestions on how these findings can be used and by whom would be a helpful link back to why the study was necessary at all.

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

**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