Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 21 July 2009

Reviewer: Marja Verhoef

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
- More careful distinctions should be made between symptoms, disease and disorders. Also be more careful with CAM treatments, therapies, practices and methods.
- The literature review in the Introduction could be expanded, especially with respect to IBD there are many published surveys.
- Referencing should be very carefully checked, a few examples are:
  - Ref 1: better to use the original Source: NCCAM
  - P.3 after ref 4: the sentence seems to refer to CAM use in general, but the reference relates to GI disorders.
  - Ref 5: appears to relate to disease and not to symptoms
- P. 10, ref 2, line 8 from below is about cancer and the statement is about GI problems.

Results:
- Why were those who did not use CAM for gastrointestinal disease included in the tables? That needs a rationale or clarification of the research question.

Minor Essential Revisions
All throughout there are many grammatical errors (eg. tense, plural versus singular missing words, missing articles – a, an and the) that need to be checked. To give an idea of these issues I have inserted those that arose in the Introduction only (apart from those relating to referencing):
- line 6 – probably better to say standard conventional therapies.
- line 14 – more often than….?
- line 14 – ‘are’ should be ‘is’
- line 16 – sentence starting with Although: reword, does not flow well. Why is the comparison with cancer patients’ CAM use emphasized?
- Line 4 from below: why do questions about herbal products reflect the increased acceptance of CAM?
- Line 4 from below: The aim, type, not types
- The Aim talks about patterns: 1) what patterns?, and 2) in the Abstract the purpose is worded differently: factors (which ones?) and not patterns; prevalence and not frequency; those attending a GI clinic and not those with GI problems (on page 4 it is GI symptoms and diseases).
- This study is NOT about prevalence as the denominator is not known. Incidence can also not be assessed.

Methods:
- The nurse assisted rather than consulted the patients.
- Who was recruited? Consecutive patients? All or some? Who approached them? New and recurrent patients?
- Anonymity is not possible in a study like this, but confidentiality is.
- It would be helpful to present the list of therapies.

Results:
- Table 1: were the herbal teas those that were not specifically used for GI?
- Table 2: might be nice to put in order from most common to least, to facilitate reading. Please explain how these groupings were established. For example, why is constipation both a symptom and a disease, how was this determined? How would patients know?
- Table 3: 'Benefits received' and 'reasons for use' maybe very different. Patients apparently were asked about benefits, but the table presents reasons. Also the text and the wording in the table is inconsistent. The percentage of 21.5% for fighting the disease is different from the one in the table.
- Table 4: n is the number of responses and not the number of participants, this should be clear.

Discussion:
- This is not a prospective study.
- How relevant are comparisons with CAM users who have a different disease in different countries?
- The discussion should make clearer distinctions between what distinct point is being made and why. For example, the sentence of prevalence of GI symptoms (p.10) should be in a different paragraph as the following sentences as the link is not clear – in fact there is no link. Also, the sentence on information sources is not a point of discussion, but just a one line result.
- On page 12 results are being provided about patients' beliefs and adverse effects. If these relate to the current study they should be in the results, if not they should be referenced.
- It is likely that the differences in CAM use between countries are more complex than age alone – however no age related data are provided for other countries to assess this statement.
- The comment on the need of a control group is incorrect as this is not a study that compares efficacy or effectiveness of treatments.
Conclusion:
- The conclusion that CAM use in patients with GI disorder in Turkey is the same as in other studies, is only based on a few studies and the differences between these studies in how CAM was defined and assessed is not identified. In addition, the reason for including those who used CAM for non-GI related reasons was not fully accounted for.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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