Reviewer's report

Title: The CAM Health Belief Questionnaire (CHBQ): Development and Validation of a Short Survey Instrument for Use in Medical Education Settings

Version: 1 Date: 30 October 2003

Reviewer: Sheila Greenfield

Reviewer's report:

In the light of the trend towards introducing CAM familiarisation courses into healthcare professional training courses and the consequent need to assess their impact, this is an interesting and relevant paper which advances the debate about how to measure the impact of such courses on students' attitudes to CAM. This is an area in which existing literature is limited. In general the style of the paper is concise and well written. One general observation would be that as the study on which the paper is based is set in the USA context, there are a number of points in the paper relating to the USA medical training system which need further explanation to be fully understood by an international audience.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. Background, lines 5/6: are there any more recent figures available for the number of US medical schools teaching CAM as it is probably likely to have increased since?
2. last line of study design measures section: IRB—although a full definition of some of the abbreviations used is given at the end of the paper it would be more satisfactory if the full definitions were given in the text followed by the abbreviation in brackets.
3. conclusion and discussion, line 50: should consider putting 'curricula'

Minor Compulsory Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Background, line 37: there should be a space between 'of' and 'this'
2. Study design, line 13: this should read 'were framed'.
3. results, line 11: there should be a space between 'cohorts' and 'did'
4. CAM information resources line 11: there is a missing bracket before p values
5. IMAQ & CHBQ score reliabilities, line 4: there should be a gap between 'by' and 'the'.
6. conclusion and discussion, line 31: this should read 'variety of online CAM resources'
7. conclusion and discussion, line 41: there should be a gap between 'all' and 'classes'
8. conclusion & discussion line 52: should this read 'rather than to change already...'

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. methods; Study sample, lines 1-4: do the numbers of students included represent the total number of 1st/2nd year medical students in the College at the time. If not, how were the students included selected?
2. Line 10: more explanation of what the Patient/Doctor course involves need to be given.
3. study design, line 4: what was the scope of the literature review?
4. study design, line 15: it is stated here that responses to CHBQ & IMAQ scores were computed—the process needs clarification as in the previous paragraph it is suggested that the IMAQ is too long and not suitable for use in these settings. Is this the pilot of IMAQ referred to? It is later stated (data collection section) that both the IMAQ & CHBQ were administered at the same time, the rationale for administering both in the light of the statements made about the unsuitability of IMAQ needs to be clearly explained. It would be helpful for understanding and to enable the reader to make the comparison if IMAQ as well as CHBQ items were given
5. study design, line 24: how was the question phrased regarding students' self reported use of
CAM—was a time period specified/frequency of use?

6. results, lines 12-14: further explanation of the terms used here 'premedical science majors, humanities majors, mean grade point averages' need to be explained for a non USA audience.

7. results, CAM modality use: this section needs to be rephrased taking into account point 5 above.

8. CAM information resources: presumably students were given a pre-determined list of resources—if so this should be stated

9. conclusions and discussion, lines 15/16, lines 19-21: there is some repetition here.

10. lines 20/21: again this may need rephrasing in the light of points 5 and 7—was the question about self-reported CAM use asked of the students in the study in exactly the same way as in the 1997 US population survey i.e. is it truly comparable and if not then the statements made need to be qualified accordingly

11. lines 39/40: this sentence needs careful consideration—is it meant to suggest that the teaching session had had no effect?

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:

I am currently involved in a cross national study of medical student attitudes to CAM organised by the University of Exeter which includes the IMAQ questionnaire.