Author's response to reviews

Title: Comparative survey of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) attitudes and use and resource-seeking behavior amongst medical students, residents & faculty

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Author's response to reviews: see over
To: The Editor
    BMC Medical Education

From: Desiree Lie, MD, MSED

Re: Revisions to MS: 1545790456108913
    ‘Comparative survey of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) attitudes and use and resource-seeking behavior amongst medical students, residents & faculty’ by Desiree A Lie MD, MSEd and John Boker PhD

Date: 11 September 2006

Dear BMC Medical Education Editor,

Thank you for providing the reviewer comments and instructions for revising our submission. We are delighted at the opportunity to revise our manuscript to meet the reviewers’ requests for minor and discretionary revisions, and your formatting requirements. We appreciate the effort and time the reviewers took to make these constructive suggestions which we agree improve the manuscript.

In our resubmitted manuscript, green text is used to point out the revised text. The revisions are made as follows:

1. Reviewer 1 comments:
   - Reviewer 1 is concerned about the speculative nature of the conclusion that ‘we should focus on content issues rather than changing attitudes’. We agree that this is based on opinion rather than the results of the study. We do consider this an important practical point that derives from our study. Accordingly we have now revised the sentence to make its speculative nature explicit in the ‘Conclusion’ section (change in bold): ‘If so, we speculate that CAM instruction could be best directed toward increasing student knowledge of CAM modalities available in their communities and skills to access, appraise and interpret evidence on CAM use, to appropriately advise patients.’

2. Reviewer 2 comments:
   - Reviewer 2 is concerned that on page 7, it is stated that ‘statistical analyses were used for between group comparisons’ and that these ‘do not show up anywhere else in the paper’. We apologize for this embarrassing omission and have revised the text of the data analysis and results sections, as well as supplemented figures 2 to 4, to correct the error and address this critique, as follows (green color indicates where text was changed):

   ‘Data analysis’
Analyses were performed using SPSS version 13 software (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, Illinois). First, descriptive statistics for all variables across all respondents were computed. Demographics of respondents (age, gender and self-identified ethnicity) were documented. Demographics for each type of respondent (student, intern and faculty) were reported in aggregate. The data for MS1 and MS2 were pooled for each level of learner. Between-group comparisons of CHBQ total scores and overall CAM modality use were made by one-way analysis of variance; significant F-tests were followed by pair-wise, independent t-tests.

Results

The final sample included 667 respondents with 53% (n=355) medical students, 39% (n=258) interns and 8% (n=54) faculty. Response rate for medical student respondents was 96.5%. Response rate for intern respondents was 100%. Response rate for faculty respondents was 60%.

Respondents and their characteristics

50% of respondents were male. 43% of student respondents identified themselves as white compared to 40% of interns and 59% of faculty. 92% of student respondents were aged 20-29 compared to 66% of interns and 7% of faculty. 8% of students were aged over 30 years compared to 34% of interns and 93% of faculty.

CAM modality use (fig.2A and 2B)

Faculty used a significantly higher total number of CAM modalities than either students or residents (F=26.18; p<.0005). Students and residents did not differ in this regard. Furthermore, faculty were most likely to use each CAM modality. Across the 3 groups of respondents, massage was the most frequently used modality, followed by Spirituality and herbals. The next 3 highest rates of use occurred for meditation, chiropractic and traditional Oriental Medicine. Students and interns were similarly likely to use meditation and chiropractic but their use was lower than that of faculty.

CHBQ scores (fig. 3 and 4)

Mean scores for all 3 respondent groups exceeded (p<.0005) the hypothetical scale midpoint of 35 (i.e., a score representing neutral responses to CAM practice and use). Mean score was highest (F=24.71; p<.0005) for faculty (54.5) and similar for medical students (47.8) and interns (46.2) (fig. 3). Medical students at 3 different points in their training (years 1, 2 and 3) showed similar (p=.205) mean CHBQ scores (fig. 4) with no significant change (p=.179) in mean scores for the cohort followed from year 1 to 3.

In addition, the following corresponding change was made in the Results section of the Abstract:

‘Compared to medical students and interns, faculty who teach or intend to integrate CAM into their instruction had significantly (p<.0005) more positive attitudes and used CAM modalities significantly (p<.0005) more often.’

3. Reviewer 3 comments:
• Academic Titles (‘Clinical Professor’) were added to page 1. We note that this suggestion differs from the manuscript formatting instructions provided on your web site but will defer to reviewer 3’s suggestion.

• ‘Advice’ has been changed to ‘advise’ on page 2.

• The sentence in question ‘At the University of California, Irvine....’ has been revised to be exactly as suggested by reviewer 3.

• The description of MS2 and MS3 surveys has been simplified to read: ‘The survey of both MS2 cohorts occurred after exposure to 3 hours of didactic CAM instruction in a required Patient Doctor course. One cohort also was resurveyed at the end of the third year of medical school, i.e. three times in total, in year 1, 2 and 3 of medical school.’

• Figure 2 has been decompressed and is now labeled as figures 2A and 2B, splitting the modalities into two halves. This presentation maintains the comparisons among the 3 types of respondents and makes it easier to read.

We hope that these revisions meet with your approval and will be happy to further revise the manuscript as directed. Thank you very much for the opportunity to resubmit our work.

Respectfully,

Desiree Lie, MD, MSEd
First author.