Reviewer’s report

Title: Patterns of medical pluralism among adults: results from the 2001 National Health Interview Survey in Taiwan

Version: 5 Date: 28 March 2010

Reviewer: Lisa Lix

Reviewer’s report:

Minor Essential Revisions:

This manuscript continues to have significant weaknesses and the authors have not adequately addressed several of the revisions requested by the reviewers.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Page 4: The purpose of this manuscript is to investigate the characteristics of individuals who adopt medical pluralism. The manuscript does not address the topic of adverse health effects of medical pluralism. Therefore, the latter topic should not be discussed in the Introduction.

Page 7: Please clarify what is meant by the phrase “deny claiming their NHI medical records”. I believe that the authors are trying to explain why the linkage of the survey and claims data could not be achieved for 100% of survey respondents, as requested by another reviewer, but this element of the manuscript continues to lack clarity.

Page 8: Please correct the contradiction in two sentences. First, the authors say “The MP in this study did not include TCM and WM hospitalisation because all patients admitted to the hospital had visited ambulatory care.” However, later in the same paragraph they say “Utilisation of WM and TCM health care services included admission to a hospital and clinic visits.”

Page 9: Please provide one or more supporting/justifying references for the following sentence: “People with a habit of tobacco smoking and/or alcohol drinking and/or areca chewing were considered as having unhealthy lifestyles.”

Page 10: The statistical analysis section does not provide any information about interactions amongst the explanatory variables as requested in a previous review. Also, the authors indicate that they used the Hosmer-Lemeshow procedure to evaluate goodness of fit but they do not report any goodness of fit statistics in the Results section.

Page 11: Please report p-values for the analyses of the association between participation in the study and age and sex distribution of the study sample.

Page 13: “These findings imply that TCM in Taiwan is popular and that one in three people may be not satisfied with WM.” It is erroneous to conclude that the
results imply dissatisfaction with western medicine, a point that was already raised in a previous review. This sentence should be removed from the manuscript.

Page 16: the paragraph that begins “The interaction of Chinese herbal medicine…” is not directly relevant to the findings of this study. This paragraph should be removed and the relevant implications of the study should be discussed in place of this paragraph.

Page 17: The section on strengths and limitations of the study is too brief. One limitation of this study is that it gives only a cross-sectional perspective on medical pluralism and does not provide any information about whether it is increasing or decreasing over time and whether the characteristics of adopters are changing over time. Another potential limitation is the definition of medical pluralism that was adopted and its consistency with the definitions used in previous research, a point that was raised in a previous review. Also, there is no supporting literature cited for the last sentence, "We considered that the results may be biased if respondents misreported their sociodemographic and health behaviors."

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract: Please clearly state the purpose of the manuscript in the last sentence of the background section. Please revise the last sentence to reflect the relevant implications of the study (as per my previous comments).

Page 5, 7th line from the top: The acronym for medical pluralism should be used here.

Page 7: The first two sentences in the section entitled “definitions and measures” are not grammatically correct. Avoid using both "defined" and "definition" in the same sentence. The acronym FT, which is used for the first time, it not defined in the first sentence of the section.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.