Reviewer's report

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

Version: 6 Date: 5 May 2010

Reviewer: Deepa Rao

Reviewer's report:

Thank you once again to the authors for addressing concerns raised in previous reviews. The content flows much better, the language is appropriate and the manuscript is much tighter. I do still have concerns about certain sections particularly the background and the results section. I will detail them in the following sections.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Page 4: The background section still requires substantial revision. The need for the study is still not clear. The abstract states that the study was conducted due to concerns about increasing use of CAM worldwide. But this is not addressed in the background section. What are these concerns? There is a statement on the increasing use of CAM attracting physicians’ attention but no detail has been provided as to what it is that has the physicians concerned.

2. Page 4: There is also a statement made that the use of TCM is common in Taiwan. The study referred to (Ref 25), reports 10.4% of the population using TCM. It seems too low a figure to make the conclusion that the use is ‘common’. Other countries have reported much higher prevalence of use of CAM. Also how long ago was this study conducted? Is it possible that the use may have increased in recent years?

3. A grammatical issue. Page 4: WM is believed to be useful all over the world, while the traditional medicine(s) of India, China, Korea, Taiwan and other countries are (not is) well established and commonly used.

4. Page 4: References 27, 28 and 30 are quoted as reporting the increasing prevalence of CAM use among Indians when in fact the titles of these articles indicate that the studies were conducted in Sri Lanka. It might be useful to clarify whether the population studied was Sri Lankans or Indians residing in Sri Lanka. Also the articles are more than 20 years old. Might be useful to find something that is more recent as there is a good possibility of patterns of use having changed in two decades.

5. Also is there a particular reason why only Indians were quoted? It seemed a bit out of context. If the intent is to highlight the increasing use of CAMs worldwide then references should be made to other groups e.g. China where prevalence of TCM use is much higher.
6. Page 4: a study has been referred to reporting MP in Taiwan (Ref 21). It is unclear how the following statement is relevant to MP – ‘The study concluded that patients with folk-religion beliefs or respiratory diseases favoured TCM, patients suffering from endocrine or metabolic diseases were more likely to use WM’. To me, this statement indicates choice or preference of one medical system over another. Unsure how this is related to MP. Unless the patients used both but preferred one over the other, this is irrelevant.

7. Page 6: Need to provide the full form of NHIS and NHI as using this acronym for the first time. Line 5, need a dash between noninstitutional i.e. non-institutional.

8. This section can be reorganised to make it flow better. I would prefer to have the information on NHI on page 7 before explaining the methods of data collection. Also why are there different sentences explaining what the NHI database contains. It starts on page 6 (last line) and then continues on to the next page. Can we have just one sentence that explains what the database contains?

9. Page 8 first sentence: Unclear why the use of TCM and WM were not considered MP even if they co-occurred in a patient. Please provide an explanation.

10. Page 11 and 12 Results: There is a lot of repetition of results. The same results are repeated with p values and then again with OR. Can we have the results together so we can limit the repetition.

11. Page 12 Results: the result of high density of WM physicians association with adopting MP has been reported twice (Line 1 and Lines 15-16). However in the discussion section, page 16 (line 1), the authors state that living in areas with a high density of WM physicians was not associated with MP. This is contradictory to results presented. Please clarify.

12. Page 15 (Line 17): It would be nice to state the results for the reference quoted – The relationship between the increasing use of TCM and the growth in the number of TCM physicians has been investigated – what is the relationship? And how is it relevant to MP?

- Minor Essential Revisions

A few grammatical errors that can be taken care of easily.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'