Reviewer's report

Title: From Parallel Practice to Integrative Health Care: A Conceptual Framework

Version: Date: 18 April 2004

Reviewer: Stewart Mercer

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

This is a useful paper which deserves publication and will help researchers, practitioners, and health care planners think more broadly about the design and evaluation of health care. However, I feel at times the authors switch from discussing integrative care in it's broadest sense, to discussing it in the context of CAM. My understanding of the intention of the paper is to present the models in this broad view (and integrative care often involves a number of services and approaches, not including CAM), with reference to CAM as an example. This needs to be clarified in the paper and in table 1 (bottom column of table, refers to blending of conventional and CAM..is this an example of an integrative model ?(if so, insert 'for example'? Or is the paper about integrative CAM models of care?). Below is a page by page response to the paper;

Discussion (page 3): Philosophy. The authors introduce the term 'holism' for the first time in the paper, and put in brackets what seems to be their definition. Definitions of holism vary widely, so the authors should make it clear that this is their definition, and if possible, insert a reference to this definition. The last sentence of the paragraph states that 'reliance on the biomedical model of disease decreases as additional theoretical approaches are incorporated'. This may be true in CAM integrative care, but may not be true across the spectrum of conventional care, where all practitioners may essentially working from a biomedical model. I suggest the authors either a)in sert the term 'CAM'if this is what they are referring to;b) insert a reference to back up their claim, or c) insert 'may decrease' instead of 'decreases'.

Final paragraph (page 6/7). The key issue in this proposed 'health care system that incorporates a number of different practice models' is flexibility. The authors should make this explicit rather than implicit. Such flexibility is a major challenge for large health care organisations.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Abstract(page 1): Last line of summary; replace 'will' with 'may'

Summary (page 7). The summary is a bit confusing I feel. My suggestion is to replcaeq the second line (begining 'This conceptual framework..) with something like 'This conceptual framework may be useful in the generation of testable hypotheses, and provide a common 'starting point' for researchers from a variety of different disciplines. The framework will thus provide the context for the description and explanation of research findings. The framework may also provide helpful guidance on 'individualised care' - which models of care are the best for which kinds of patients and problems - something that has been elusive to date.
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None