Reviewer's report

Title: The Canadian natural health products (NHP) regulations: Industry perceptions and compliance factors

Version: Date: 6 March 2006

Reviewer: Jacqueline Low

Reviewer's report:

General

The title and abstract of this paper accurately convey what the researchers found. The findings presented in this paper address an important topic and are worthy of publication. The research question posed by the authors is original and the design of the study, including the particular methods of data gathering and analysis used, were appropriate in addressing that question. The methods were sufficiently described such that other researchers would be able to address the same research question.

However, there are problems with this paper. The paper needs to be rigorously edited to address writing and organizational problems throughout. Issues of grammar and word choice, as well as overuse of subheadings and abbreviations all obscure the clarity of prose and arguments made in this paper. Other substantive problems that detract from the strength of this paper are itemized below.

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

1. Introduction, page 4, paragraph 1, 3 lines from the top: This sentence provides an over-brief explanation for the "increased use of complementary and alternative medicines (CAM)." For example, dissatisfaction with biomedicine can not explain the use of alternative and/or complementary therapies as many of the people who express dissatisfaction with biomedicine do not use alternative and/or complementary health care (See Sharma 1992, Low 2004). Either this issue needs to be discussed in more detail or alternatively, since the focus of the paper is not the rise in popularity of these approaches to health and healing, delete this sentence from the introduction.

2. Page 5, 5 lines from the bottom: The concept "target group compliance" needs to be briefly explained.

3. Page 6, 3rd through 6th sentence from the top: These sentences are out of place here and belong in the methods section of the paper.

4. Page 7, 6 lines from the top: A few examples of such products, either here or in an endnote, would be useful.

5. Pages 6-8: The sections The Natural Health Products (NHP) Regulations and Overview of the NHP Industry in Canada sections are out of place here and should be moved to the Background section of the paper.
6. Page 9, 3 lines from the top: These two sentences are out of place and belong in the section subtitled Data Gathering and Analysis.

7. Pages 10-11: The text under the subheading Companies Interviewed does not describe results so it should be moved to the methods section where the authors describe the study.

8. Page 12, 4 lines from the bottom: Add an informant quotation here so the reader will know what the authors mean by "painful."

9. Page 14, 7 lines from the top: More explanation is necessary here. The informant quotation here does not illustrate the point the author make above it.

10. Page 15, 17 lines from the bottom: A sentence needs to be added here. The authors are making the implicit argument that non-enforcement leads to non-compliance. This point needs to be made explicitly and needs to be supported with data.

11. Page 15: The subtitle "Likelihood that Noncompliance Results in Penalties" does not accurately describe all of the findings presented in that subsection. "Enforcement and Noncompliance" is a better subtitle here.

12. Page 15: The section subtitled "Likelihood that Noncompliance Results in Penalties" needs reorganization and repetitive statements need to be deleted.

13. Page 16, 6 lines from the top: A quotation from an informant is necessary here to increase the validity of the summary the authors present.

14. Page 17, 5 lines from the top: Why large firm employees were satisfied with the standards needs further discussion. From the data presented earlier one reason is consolidation of their market dominance.

15. Page 18, 8 lines from the bottom: The authors state that their informants did not question the legitimacy of the regulations, however, see the informant quotation beginning 5 lines from the top on page 13 where one informant does question the legitimacy of the regulations.

16. Page 18, 6 lines from the bottom: Discussion of the limitations of the study are out of place here. Move to methods or to a new section immediately preceding suggestions for future research.

17. Page 19, 12 lines from the bottom: Clarify what is meant by "Although not specifically researched."

18. Page 21, 6 lines from the bottom: Clarify what is meant by "other programs."

19. Page 21, 2 lines from the bottom: An example of another industry sector would be useful here.

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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)

1. Ensure consistency of point of view in writing. At times first person plural is used and at others, third person. I would suggest first person be used throughout the paper.

2. Page 5, 5 lines from the bottom: Delete the word "theoretically" as it is ambiguous what is meant by it here.
3. Page 5, 11 lines from the bottom: The word "appear" is in appropriate here. If the factors are listed in the literature then they are argued to affect compliance, they don't only "appear to effect compliance."

4. Page 5, 11 lines from the bottom: The words "the regulated" are misused here. It is the natural health products that are being regulated, not the people who were interviewed for the study.

5. Page 6, 11 lines from the top: This sentence is not necessary and can be deleted.

6. Page 9, 2 lines from the bottom: Insert the phrase 'The qualitative analysis software' before NVIVO. Readers unfamiliar with qualitative analysis in general are unlikely to have heard of NVIVO.


8. Replace { } with [ ] throughout.

9. Page 13, 16 lines from the bottom: The word "thus" is misused here as it does not logically connect the two sentences it is sued to link.

10. Page 13, 13 lines from the bottom: The full stop belongs after the "(7, Small)."

11. Page 17, 8 lines from the top: The two sentences concluding this paragraph are not necessary and can be deleted.

12. No need to capitalize "Regulations" throughout the paper. Only use uppercase when referring to "the New Health Product Regulations."

13. Page 22, 9 lines from the top: The word "predicted" is misused here.

14. Page 22, 8 lines from the bottom: The word "however" is misused here.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests.