**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Health costs in anthroposophic therapy users: a two-year prospective cohort study

**Version:** Date: 22 March 2006

**Reviewer:** Gene Feder

**Reviewer's report:**

**General**

This paper reports the health costs of anthroposophical therapies, based on a previously reported cohort of 717 new patients in ambulatory care in 134 anthroposophical practices in Germany. Cost comparisons are made between the year before anthroposophical treatment began and for the subsequent two years. Costs were estimated from recall of consultations. The overall conclusion is that care within this setting is at least health cost neutral. I look forward to a cost-effectiveness study in the future....

1. New and well-defined question? Economic analyses of anthroposophic treatments are rare. These treatments are a relatively popular form of CAM in Switzerland and Germany and also available from medical practitioners throughout Europe and, to a lesser extent, the rest of the world. This paper poses a modest, well articulated question about comparative costs with orthodox medical practice.

2. Methods: The before and after comparison based on patient-derived information is appropriate and the economic analysis is meticulous, with a good description of detailed information on the sources of costs and the analytic method. Recruitment to the cohort is adequately described.

3. Sound data and well controlled? Within the limitations of this method, yes.

4. Title and abstract are accurate in relation to the paper

5. Adherence to reporting standards: yes

6. Writing is very clear. (if only I could write in German like the authors write in English.

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

None

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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. Flow diagram of recruitment and follow up would be a better way of conveying that information than the paragraph on pp. 7&8

2. I think the term “favourable” in relation to occupation is wrong. Why are some jobs more favourable than others? Also I don't understand the difference between wage earners and salaried employees (table 2)

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**Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)**

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**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I have been paid to chair a guideline development group on the use of mistletoe by Weleda, an anthroposophical medicines manufacturer. That company might benefit from the publication of this paper.

I have no other competing interests.