Reviewer’s report

Title: Use of traditional Chinese medicine in the Chinese population in Taiwan

Version: 1 Date: 25 September 2006

Reviewer: Lyren Chiu

Reviewer’s report:

General
The article reports a large-scale study which investigated prevalence and characteristics of TCM use in Taiwan. The article could be important in its field if it could address the following comments.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. The problem statement could be more precisely conceptualized. The purpose of a large-scale study needs to be justified. The author may provide more background information about the National Health Insurance (NHI), Taiwanese population and their use of TCM before and after the NHI instigated.
2. The authors could provide more methodological detail which includes information about how the informants were chosen, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and how the research instruments were designed.
3. The authors provide information about how they pooled the data from TCM claims datasets and how they analyze the data.
4. The authors may describe how the national dataset was originally obtained.
5. The authors mentioned population denominator data by age. I would suggest the authors to include gender as it was also analyzed and discussed in this article.
6. The discussion about TCM use in Taiwan is limited and imprecise. The authors should compare and validate from previous studies and suggested implications for health care professionals.

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. TCM is a considered a CAM instead of a component of CAM in Western countries.
2. I am not convinced that use of herbal remedies originated from ancient China. Indigenous people in Taiwan also used herbs.
3. Be aware of using terminology. For example, the authors may consider “traumatology manipulative therapy”.
4. It was not clear how the authors adjust age in TCM use.
5. The organization of the findings could be more precise. I would suggest to effectively use tables and figures.
6. The authors may consider reorganize Table 3 and add percentage to Table 1, 2, and 4.
7. The authors mentioned “the widespread use of TCM in the Chinese population is because TCM is indigenous to China for more than 2000 years.” How would this fact affect people in Taiwan? What happened to TCM in Taiwan before 1996? (refer to page 9)
8. The authors may consider use of any data to support the statement that “the insurance coverage for TCM visits might also play a significant role for the frequent use of TCM in Taiwan.”
9. Research to date suggests that Chinese women manage health and illness of their families. Unemployment statement requires further analysis (refer to page 10).
10. The authors mentioned a German survey which indicated that young age people had a positive attitude for CAM. How would this finding support the statement that “adults are more frequent users of TCM/CAM than children are”? (refer to page 10)
11. It’s good to discuss training program. However, the authors should not
jump to conclusion. Please refer to the first paragraph on page 11. The conclusion about the evaluation of the impact of TCM on quality of care and teaching program come from no where.
12. The discussion about limitation could be included in the exclusion criteria section.

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:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interest.