Reviewer’s report

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

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Reviewer: CHUNHUEI CHI

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General
This study is quite significant in that it is probably the first study of traditional medicine utilization using a national data instead of sample survey data. Results of this study will be quite interesting to many readers and policy makers in the world. Probably one of the most interesting finding is that 62.5% of Taiwanese used TCM during this data period.

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

1. p.6.
Please clarify what does it mean by “…defined by the number of patients who filed insurance claims,…”? Normally patients under Taiwan’s NHI do not file claim. Instead, it is the providers who file claims.

2. p.6. Statistical Analysis
Need to describe briefly the main method used, such as frequency count and percentage.

3. p.7
It is not clear what does it mean for a patient to “accept” TCM in this study. Does it mean that they had any usage? It seems that the authors did not conduct any survey on the public’s preference or acceptance for TCM.

4. Table 1. (p.19)
It is not clear what does “New Patients” means? If it means people who used NHI covered Chinese medicine for the first time, the numbers do not add up.

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. p.12 Limitations
This data does not include usage by patients who pay entirely out-of-pocket, such as services provided by Chinese medicine practitioners that were not covered by Taiwan’s NHI.

2. Table 3. (p.21)
It will be more informative if the authors can produce a table that displays the average number of TCM visits per person per year, from 1996 to 2001, year by year, and percentage change to previous year.

3. Comparison with Western (allopathic) is important for readers to have a reference point. For example, what was the average number of outpatient visit per person per year for Western medicine vs. Chinese medicine in Taiwan? What was the top 10 diagnostic conditions for Western medicine in Taiwan, as compared with Chinese medicine?

4. Conclusion
To make this study and its result more interesting to the authors, it will be helpful to discuss in the Conclusion section what are the implications of this result for other societies?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. If the table already presented the complete results, it is not necessary to repeat them in the text description. Focus discussions only on the most important one to the authors. (e.g., p.7)

**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:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.