Reviewer's report

Title: Utilization of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) among children from a German birth cohort (GINIplus): patterns, costs, and trends of use

Version: 2 Date: 4 January 2015

Reviewer: Alfred Laengler

Reviewer's report:

This is a methodological interesting paper with a large cohort and one of the few longitudinal data on CAM-use in children in Germany.

There are some major compulsory revisions which have to be made to accept this paper for publication:

1. The authors should give some information about the validation process of the questionnaire used.

2. The authors categorize in 6 categories they define by their own. The data would be comparable with the international literature if the authors would categorize their data according to the NCCAM-categories.

3. It is unclear why herbal drugs which are available by prescription only were excluded from analysis (page 6 line 19ff).

4. "homeopath" are categorized as CAM Providers; this suggests that they are consulted as complement or alternative to a conventional physician. But in Germany many conventional physicians are eligible for using the appendix "homeopath" together with e.g. "pediatrician". (page 7 line 6)

5. page 11 line 15-17 can be destroyed without loss of information because this information is given in the methods section already.

6. page 12 line 8-11 gives information which can be deleted without loss of substantial information.

7. page 16 line 5 ff is very speculative and not covered by the results of this study. The idea, that health-insurance coverage of CAM-remedies may be the reason for the decline in CAM-use from the 10-years to the 15-years cohort is in contrast to the theory presented on page 17 line 11-14.

8. The conclusions are not covered by the results and should be totally renewed.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field.
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'