Reviewed report

Title: Disease-specific differences in the use of traditional Korean medicine in Korea

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Reviewer: Shinn-Jang Hwang

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript evaluate the utilization pattern of Traditional Korea Medicine from 2008 Korea Health Panel survey. Results showed that Traditional Korea Medicine used only in small amount of cases in emergencies and hospitalization, and accounted for 7.8% of total outpatient services and 9.9% of total medical cost. Traditional Korea Medicine use was higher in patients with nervous system and musculoskeletal system diseases. The contents of this manuscript need to be revised.

1. Author mentioned about the comparison of medical services and costs between Western medicine and Traditional Korea Medicine. How many doctors of Western medicine and Traditional Korea Medicine should be provided. In addition. Hospital number of both Western medicine and Traditional Korea Medicine should also be provided.

2. Disease classification system of Traditional Korea Medicine was not clear. How to use Sasang constitutional or Ki theory should briefly mentioned. There was no solid relationship of the disease classification system between western medicine and Traditional Korea Medicine reported in the literature.

3. This study not only used public data from the Korea Health Panel survey, it also contains interview data from the trained interviewers. IRB approval is needed because authors mentioned that it represented the Traditional Korea Medicine in Korea.

4. Author only mentioned about the Traditional Korea Medicine outpatient visits, diagnosis and cost. How about the emergency and hospitalization? What kinds of diseases use Traditional Korea Medicine in the emergency room and hospitalization?

5. This survey only used 2008 Korea Health Panel survey data. It can not represent the true prevalence of Traditional Korea Medicine use and utilization pattern. Author should provide at least 3 years survey data to show the trend of use or new Traditional Korea Medicine user in 2 or 3 years.

6. In the manuscript, the medical services and medical cost only calculated in those survey patients. It should be clear mentioned and how to represent the whole Korea conditions. Was there rural and urban difference existed?

7. There is no mention of Traditional Korea Medicine content. How much percentage of acupuncture and manipulative therapy beside Korean herb treatment?
8. In Page 8, second paragraph, How to define the chronic disease patients?
9. In Page 11, second paragraph, author cited the report of utilization pattern of Traditional Chinese Medicine from Taiwan. However, author should also cite the utilization pattern of acupuncture reference (THE JOURNAL OF ALTERNATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE 2006;12(4): 379–387). Disease of the musculoskeletal system was the major indication for acupuncture in Taiwan.
10. The limitations of the study should be clearly mentioned. Sampling survey data? Accuracy of disease diagnosis? Visits with multiple diagnosis?

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests