Reviewer's report

Title: Views and experiences of health care professionals towards the use of African traditional, complementary and alternative medicines among patients with HIV infection: the case of eThekwini health district, South Africa.

Version: 4 Date: 20 February 2015
Reviewer: Betty Namuddu

Reviewer's report:

Manuscript title: Views and experiences of health care professionals toward the use of traditional, complementary and alternative medicines and adverse events among patients with HIV infection: the case of eThekwini health district, South Africa
Version: 2 Date: 19 February 2015
Reviewer: Betty Namuddu

Major Compulsory revisions

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? The question is very good but I do not think it is well defined by the author. The main topic is focuses on the views and experiences of health care workers. This poses 2 specific objectives; (i) the views and (ii) the experiences. However, the author answers the Awareness question which is not related to the main the title; “To establish awareness on the use….”??

2. For views and experiences, or more so, establishing awareness on something can appropriately answer qualitative questions and not quantitative questions. The author needs to explain how accurately she managed to measure experiences or views in this study.

3. If coding was done so well the author needs to elaborate in the methods section on how data was handled and the quality control in the data collection section. Was there any transcribing done? Please clarify. It is not clear what the author means by questionnaire based study. This needs to be clarified.

4. For simplicity the author needs to rearrange the methods section and have subsections like; Study design, subject selection, data collection and then statistical analysis. This would make the section have a good flow of information. Give more explanation in this section for the summary of it is found in the abstract.

5. The author can give a brief explanation of the study sites just after the introduction section and not in the method section. Explain about the study settings. Can the author explain the process she went through to get the respondents, did she have phone contact to arrange the meeting or she just walked in the institution and talked to any health care giver that she found at the time of her data collection? Clarify please.
6. The data collection tool does not seem to have allowed for qualitative data collection but the title calls for more information. Elaborate on this.

7. The study was conducted in ten sites but this could have been possible to study all cadres in the 16 sites. These are all institutions. The author needs to clarify if it is the convention in their setting to obtain permission from gatekeepers to conduct research otherwise the data may have been got “under a mango tree”.

8. Questionnaire design and coding can well fit in the data collection sub-section. The author needs explain or differentiate between coding the questions in the questionnaire and using ID numbers with no identifiers.

9. Statistical analysis section should give with elaboration on how data analysis was done.

10. The assumption of the sample size is not clear. In calculating or assuming study sample size we use statistical formulas not from publications. The author needs to make the correct attribution of the formula, it is a Kish Leslie formula for cross-sectional studies that was used here.

11. The use of standard errors in this paper should be corrected through the paper. The authors should use the more conventional precision report methods for point estimates.

12. The discussion and conclusions need to be well balanced. They are not adequately supported by the data. No views of the respondents were discussed.

13. Because causality could not be ascertained the assertion of causality by the author needs to be corrected.

14. The title and abstract are both very different and one fails to know the main focus of the author in the study. The results in the abstract, the author is reporting awareness and experience of patients' disclosure of use….but nothing about their views and experiences towards the use of the African traditional medicines. The author should also clarify on what she meant by modalities in the 2nd sentence in the results.

Minor Essential Revisions

15. The data are not sound and need a major revision especially with a high non-response rate.

16. The author needs to show or explain how the quality control of the data was handled; right from the start and this was one of the issues pointed out in the first review.

17. Clarification is still needed on the format of the study tool used to collect the views. Show if pre-coded, semi-structured or open ended. The coding mentioned by the author does not seem to refer to the question.

18. They authors should remove ‘to minimize sampling bias” and use the proper language like ‘to determine the prevalence.

19. I do not understand if the author meant to write adverse reaction or Event. The author should define these terms and state how they were verified otherwise it should not be reported.
20. The figures appear to be genuine but need statistical reviews.
21. The authors have made an attempt rewriting of the work to adhere to standard STROBE reporting of cross-sectional studies but the main outcome is not clearly stated and discussion does not largely adhere.
22. The discussion has not followed the standard STROBE format for cross-sectional studies. For example causality was not ascertained.
23. The authors do not clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished. No clear statement on previous work in this area has been clearly quoted by the author.
24. The conclusions are in line with the objectives but not well aligned with the title. The title does not include prevalence of awareness, which was a basis for sample size computation for this work.
25. Grammatical errors and English editions need to be checked for it to be acceptable. The author needs to be systematic with the font size all through the manuscript

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interest in this manuscript