Author’s response to reviews

Title: Complementary and alternative medicine use among outpatients during the 2015 MERS outbreak in South Korea: a cross-sectional study

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Author’s response to reviews:

Thank you very much for the comprehensive and useful review of the paper. The suggested revisions have been made in the revised manuscript and highlighted in Red color. Point-by-point response to the reviewers’ comments is given below.

Reviewer 1:

Comment:
• Inclusion of the questionnaire (translated in English) as a supplementary - this will help readers understand the context and how were the questions phrased. Was the use of CAM asked in relation to MERS-infection e.g. current usage of CAM when having symptoms/diagnosed with illness? or usage started after outbreak - even before having symptoms/diagnosis?
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. We have included the translated version of the survey instrument as an attachment.

Comment:
• Needed more description on the development of the questionnaire - any previous questionnaire used to guide the development? based on literature? theory? expert opinion? was validity testing done? what type of validity? what was changed after pilot? any second pilot?
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 110-117.
Comment:
• Data collection: How was the survey conducted? self-administered or surveyor assisted? any missing response from the respondents. if yes, how was this resolved and analysed.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 136-142.

Comment:
• Result section: Suggest to rephrase statement: (line 183) Age over 40 (OR: 2.673, CI: 1.200-5.951; OR: 4.633, CI: 1.869-11.484) - this statement is not clear as only mentioned group above 40 but the statistics showing 2 ORs and CIs. Suggest to clearly state the difference was noted in 2 different age groups between 40-49 and above 50.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 202-203 and 253-254.

Comment:
• Table 4: please can you explain why 'the perceived danger of MERS outbreak on health' was categorised into 2 (mild and severe) why others were categorised into 3 groups (low, moderate and severe). A statement at the footnote is needed.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. We have re-categorized the variable into 3 groups in the Table 4.

Comment:
• Discussion section: The discussion was well written but I think one important and interesting finding was the incongruent findings of potential predictors of CAM with other diseases. Why is/are the possible reason(s) ?
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 250-265.

Reviewer 2:

Comment:
• Title: Needs to be revised to make it more attractive and reflective
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. However, we will keep the title of the article as is because we believe the title contains all the important keywords of this article.

Comment:
• Abstract: Background should be reduced to give more weightage to Methods and Results; also it needs to be very objective, and not detailed.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 32-37.
Comment:
• Methods require changes to include sample/sampling, highlight sample obtained with response rate, remove the word 'descriptive' in the beginning. p-value set to be indicated. Include SPSS with version used for analysis.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 38 and line 42-43.

Comment:
• Results need changes; where ever word like most, more, majority etc., are used, please include number with percentage (in the brackets). Similarly inferential statistical findings to be presented with numbers and p-values.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 45-47.

Comment:
• Conclusion should be re-written and must be a conclusion of the findings without the repetition of the findings.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 50-52.

Comment:
• Background: Though reasonably done, the section could be made more strong by providing literature review and relating it to the need of the study, in particular to South Korean context. It would also be appropriate that all key words must be well introduced and linked with each other, while using a deductive approach to narrow down towards the study objectives and needs for this study. If possible, do introduce a paragraph to introduce South Korean health system, particularly in relation to CAM use, regulation towards CAM use and practice as well as, challenges & issues related to CAM use among Korean Public, especially in alleviating acute illnesses like SARS, MERS etc.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 78-85.

Comment:
• Methods:
• Though most of the standard information on reporting cross-sectional studies are present, it would be appropriate to use subheadings to denote each section under methods. You may refer to this link for the standards for all sections, in order to make this manuscript more competitive. https://www.strobe-statement.org/fileadmin/Strobe/uploads/checklists/STROBE_checklist_v4_cross-sectional.pdf
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 101, line 110-117, and line 143.
Comment:
• Results: Subheadings used are not appropriate and too long at times. Make appropriate headings, while ensuring only key findings are presented and remaining referred with appropriate table numbers for details. Also appropriate and strong reporting sentences are needed at few places.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 161-163, line 178-181, and line 185.

Comment:
• Discussion: This should be the essence of manuscript from the readers’ perspective. At present, it is not strong and describing findings. Do not repeat findings or merely compare findings with some other similar work. It should be discussed with plausible reasons, arguments, justifications etc.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. The suggested change is made in the revised manuscript in line 222-225, line 230-232, line 235-237, and line 250-265.

Comment:
• Include "Study Limitations" before conclusion and make conclusion appropriate as mentioned in the abstract section. It would also be great to include, "Future Implications" based on the findings.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. Our study limitation is stated at the end of discussion in line 266-272. Also, we have included future policy implications at the very end of our conclusion in line 281-283.

Comment:
• References: Will be updated for sure, once the changes are made.
Response:
Thank you for the suggestion. Following articles are added to our references


