Reviewer’s report

Title: Process of care in outpatient Integrative healthcare facilities: a systematic review of clinical trials.

Version: 1 Date: 31 August 2014

Reviewer: George Lewith

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Major Compulsory Revisions
The first issue, which I think is very important, is the development of the methodology employed within an integrative healthcare clinic and how that is developed. Clearly that needs to be transparent in the context of this complex intervention and not enough attention is paid to how this occurs and what general lessons we can draw from it. The authors suggest a process definition of triage, referral, diagnosis, treatment plan and review; that’s very valuable and better definitions of these areas would be enormously helpful for future researchers.

The authors suggest there’s some evidence for effectiveness for individualised integrative healthcare packages versus control treatments. The strengths and limitations of control versus integrative healthcare packages are not discussed; are we dealing with an enhanced non-specific effect associated with increased health literacy and educational input? It’s an important question to address methodologically.

Obviously there will be a debate about specific versus non-specific outcomes versus quality of life outcomes in association with health economics, clearly the need for long-term follow-up as in the majority of instances integrative health is utilised in chronic long-term conditions. These need not be debated at length as many of these points will be made elsewhere.

I think the authors need to think very carefully about the messages they want to put across about:
• The design of integrative healthcare setups.
• The study models that should and could be proposed along with the relevance and need for appropriate controls. The authors may consider issues such as Zelen designs within this context.
• A simple list of appropriate outcomes and considered duration of care.
• The kind of conditions in which they genuinely see integrative healthcare may be applied in a Western context.
• A preliminary assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the current research with a much clearer strategic approach in terms of the way forward (perhaps diagrams and tables may help in this context).

The authors do clearly acknowledge the work on which this is built, the title and abstract do convey the substance of the article but I believe the conclusions of
the abstract could be more strategic and methodological. The writing style is good and has real clarity.
This article would benefit from slightly more clarity in relation to the research question and considerably more clarity in relation to the discussion.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests.