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TITLE:

The Role of the Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Practitioner in the Development of Trust in CAM

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Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) comprises of a number of clinically and theoretically distinct therapies and practices, many becoming increasingly incorporated into the health care regimens of Australians. Based on the accounts of sixteen regular users of CAM and 10 CAM practitioners, the paper explores from a sociological perspective the development of trust in CAM treatment decision-making. A guiding hypothesis is that boundaries of trust are enacted in interaction with a CAM practitioner. Moreover, a CAM practitioner, as access point to expert CAM systems, is seen as instrumental in the formation of trust in CAM treatment. Based on qualitative data analysis, CAM users are found to perceive CAM practitioners within three categorical types, namely, CAM practitioner as Charismatic Healer; CAM practitioner as 'Other', and CAM practitioner as Familiar. The paper explores how boundaries of trust in CAM are formed for each 'type' of CAM practitioner.