

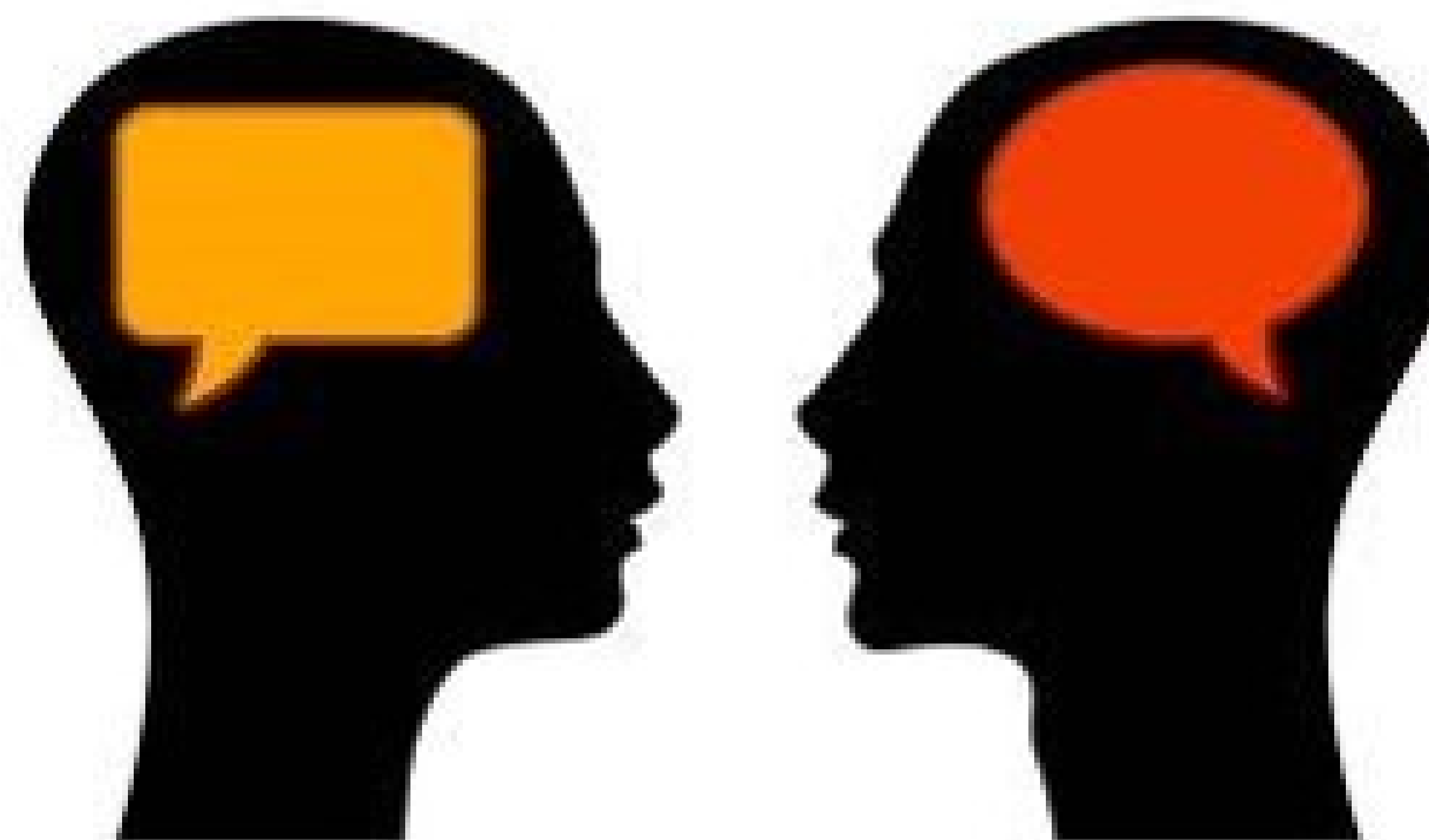
# Gaps in risk perceptions are barriers to doctor-patient communication about CAM

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## BACKGROUND

- Studies have revealed differing perceptions of risk associated with use of conventional and alternative treatments among medical doctors and CAM users
- This pilot study explored such differing risk perceptions and their possible influence on doctor-CAM user communication



## MATERIAL AND METHODS

- Participants:** 25 CAM users: cancer (13), multiple sclerosis (12)  
12 of the CAM users' medical doctors: oncologists (4), neurologists (3), general practitioners (5)
- Methodology:** Qualitative individual interviews and qualitative content analysis

## RESULTS

	CAM USERS	MEDICAL DOCTORS
<b>Perceived risk conventional treatments</b>	Conventional cancer and MS treatments may represent considerable risk to patients	Use of conventional treatment is safe
<b>Perceived risk CAM treatments</b>	CAM use is safe	CAM treatments may represent unknown risk to patients
<b>Risk knowledge</b>	It is difficult to understand personal risk based on general, scientifically based risk information given by medical doctors	It is challenging to communicate about CAM because the lack of scientific evidence and governmental regulation
<b>Experiences from doctor-CAM user communication</b>	Many medical doctors are negative to patients' use of CAM and to communication about CAM	Many CAM users are naïve and non-compliant patients who put themselves at risk by using CAM and not reporting CAM use to their doctors
<b>Communication about CAM and risk in public health care</b>	CAM users want to communicate with medical doctors in public health care about CAM use and risk	Communication about CAM use and risk associated with CAM use is not part of medical doctors' duties in public health care



## CONCLUSIONS

- Divergent risk perceptions seem to represent a so far neglected barrier to doctor-CAM user communication. To acknowledge possible differing lay and medical risk perceptions in clinical encounters is important to optimize patient safety in complex health care systems
- Medical doctors' responsibility with regard to communication about CAM use and risk with patients in public health care should be clarified by the health authorities