Reviewer's report

**Title:** Efficacy of symptomatic treatment of the common cold in adults: randomized placebo-controlled clinical trial

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 14 February 2013

**Reviewer:** Theo Verheij

**Reviewer's report:**

This in itself an interesting study, but the paper now has several weaknesses. In the Introduction the authors should explain more clearly why a combination of treatments that individually did not show relevant effects until now, would have relevant effects. Maybe the studies on those agents were not sufficient, but please explain. The authors now refer to a Cochrane review that was withdrawn (De Sutter et al, 2003) The same group wrote another Cochrane review, that is highly relevant for this paper in 2012.

Another problem is that the authors do not show results on the secondary endpoints mentioned in the Methods section. These secondary endpoints are from a clinical point of view perhaps even more interesting than the primary endpoint.

In the discussion the limitations of this trial should be discussed as well as the relevance of the effects seen. In my view those effects are small, but happy to hear what the authors think.

Minor points: The sentences on the evidence on antivirals in the Introduction can be omitted. Baseline table: P-values have no meaning since this is a randomised trial, all differences between groups are due to chance.

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

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

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests