Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 14 August 2013

**Reviewer:** Theo Verheij

**Reviewer's report:**

The introduction is still not clear on the added value of this study. Several trials have been done in this field (at least five also looking at a combination of an analgetic, antihistamine and decongestant) and therefore the authors should explain why they think that this particular combination would have a different effect than the combinations of symptomatic agents already trialed. Just stating that this precise combination was never trialed before is not sufficient.

As mentioned before the sentences on antiviral therapy can be left out of the Introduction.

As mentioned before, in a randomised study, differences in baseline characteristics are not to be tested statistically. P values have now been left out of the table, but they are still mentioned several times in the text of the paper.

The explanation the authors give now why readers should regard the very small differences in symptom scores as relevant (because it is a self-limiting disease and patients with relatively mild symptoms were included) is not convincing. Why not put more emphasis on their finding that patients in the intervention group had on average a 1.5 days shorter course of disease?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No conflict of interest