Author's response to reviews

Title: Homeopathic Treatment of Patients with Chronic Sinusitis A Prospective Observational Study with 8 Years Follow-Up

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Title: Homeopathic Treatment of Patients with Chronic Sinusitis - A Prospective Observational Study with 8 Years Follow-Up

Reviewer: Sarah Brien

Reviewer's report:

Reviewer:

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

1. Method section:
   a. The addition of subheadings would be preferable e.g. participants, outcome measures, statistical analysis
   Author: We added subheadings. => Methods

Reviewer:

b. Page 6, paragraph 2 lines 3-7. You report how you separated regression to mean from treatment effects for QoL measure. It would be beneficial to state this was not feasible for NRS data.
   Author: This is now mentioned. => Last sentence of Methods

Reviewer:

2. Discussion section,
   a. Page 10 line 3. This should be a new paragraph.
   Author: It is, but this fact was masked by the long line above in the PDF rendering. => Line 258

Reviewer:

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

1. Abstract. The reported aims of the paper were described as evaluating the treatment details. This is not reported as an aim in the main text. What does this mean?
Author: We streamlined Abstract and main text. => Line 91

Reviewer:

2. Introduction. Page 6 paragraph 2: The first sentence is a little unclear, rephrase as “usually patients seek treatment when their health i.e. below average”

Author: The sentence has been rephrased as suggested. => Line 141

Reviewer:

3. Results section

a. Page 7, paragraph 2 lines 3-4. Please reference the homeopathic dilutions you report for readers not familiar with this terminology.

Author: An explanation has been added. => Line 169

Reviewer:

4. Discussion Section

a. Paragraph 2 and 3 on page 9 could be improved. For example, the link between the second and third sentence of this paragraph is not clear. This section could be reduced to focus your supposition that these patients have other long standing chronic diseases and that due to lack of satisfactory conventional care plus the desire for treating the whole they turn to homeopathy.

Author: We have rewritten these paragraphs => Line 228

Reviewer:

b. Pages 9 -10, paragraph 3 on page 9 onwards: consultation times for conventional versus homeopathic consultations. Is there any supporting data for homeopathic consultation: you present such data for the conventional consultations? If not please could you rephrase the last sentence on page 9, starting “This might be compensated for…” to ensure this is supposition
Author: Our own data in Table 3 served as comparison to the data cited for conventional practices. We have added a reference to Table 3 and rewritten the paragraph for more clarity. => Line 254

Reviewer:
c. Page 10 paragraph 2 lines 1-2. Please reference to relevant changes in SF36 for this condition using standard treatment to support the second sentence of this paragraph.

Author: The second sentence has been deleted. => Line 267

Reviewer:
d. Page 10, paragraph 2 last sentence. Is there any suitable evidence to support your statement that regression to the mean is not an issue after years of receiving other treatment and a waiting period? If not this should be written as a possible explanation not as fact, as it currently reads now.

Author: This sentence has been rephrased. => Line 271

Reviewer:
e. Page 10, paragraph 2 line 2-3. For ease of reading, please rephrase “Our study must not be interpreted supporting conclusions regarding the efficacy of homeopathic remedies in sinusitis treatment” for example, “The results from this study cannot be seen to support the efficacy of homeopathy in the sinusitis treatment”. Following on from this I do not see how two subsequent sentences “We were unable to find evaluations… but pooled the diagnoses) on lines 5-7 of this paragraph, add to the argument you present in this paragraph. I would suggest deleting these to ensure this paragraph is not a reflection on the efficacy of homeopathy in sinusitis.

Author: We clarified the difference between the applied remedies and the whole treatment (including placebo or context effects). => Lines 279
Reviewer:
f. Page 10, paragraph 2 line 5. I would suggest the following text “(free use of additional means, no control group, randomization, or blinding)” is not required and would delete this.
Author: We followed your suggestion. => Line 283

Reviewer:
g. Page 11 paragraph 2. This section needs to be written more clearly and consisely with improved structure and flow. In particular sentences 1,4 and 9 are confusing to read and need to be rephrased.
Author: We rewrote that section. => Line 300

Reviewer:
h. Page 7, paragraph 4 line 3; “the” is missing between “During the observation period…”
Author: “The” has been inserted. => Line 191

Reviewer:
i. Page 8. Paragraph 2 line 3, replace = with “representing”
Author: This has been changed. => Line 202

Reviewer:
5. Conclusion.
a. Page 12, paragraph 2. Add “health” before the word “improvement” on line 2.
Author: We added “health” and also “quality of life”. => Line 334

Reviewer:
6. Tables
a. Table 1 Baseline population. Report that figures represent (% and N, unless otherwise stated)
Author: Missing "(\% & N)" were added. => Table 1

Reviewer:
b. Table 5. For clarity, alter the descriptor “Better by # 10%....<50% by “Better than 10% but <50%”
Author: We followed your suggestion. => Table 5

Reviewer:
c. Table 6. Missing “t” in Patients using non-pharmaceutical treatments”. In addition there is a missing value, 0, in corticosteroids at 3 months
Author: This was corrected. => Table 6

Reviewer:
7. Figure 1.
a. Nat-m is reported twice in the figure. Please amend as appropriate.
Author: This has been corrected. => Figure 1

Reviewer:
b. In view of the general readership of this journal, please also report the full names to explain the abbreviations of homeopathic remedies cited.
Author: We added the full remedy names. => Line 508

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Author: The paper has now been edited by a native speaker.
Reviewer's report:

Reviewer:

Minor essential revisions:

Check the MS for grammar and style; there are a few places with awkward English; I mention those that sprang right into view, without being comprehensive:

- p2, Methods final line: omit “from”
- p2, Results, effects size; better to write "mean difference" instead of "effect"
- p9, 2nd §, "indicative OF..."
- p10, 2nd § "impossibly caused.." is bad English; change
- p10, final sentence: it instead of "is", and better rephrase whole sentence
- p11, line 7 from end: have in its history undergone...
- p12, supported BY a grant...

Author: We followed your suggestions except for "mean difference", here we prefer Cohen's original term "effect size".

Reviewer:

Discretionary:

I think it would be wise to discuss response shift as a potential mechanism, as the treatment lasted long and it is very likely that due to response shift effects are rather under- than overestimated: e.g. Sprangers MAG, Schwartz CE. Integrating response shift into health-related quality of life research: a theoretical model. Social Science and Medicine 1999;48:1507-15.

Author: We added response shift to the discussion. => Line 273
Reviewer:

All the references appear after the periods of sentences. This is somewhat unusual. Unless required by style sheet, change to before periods.

Author: This citation style was changed. => ubiquitous
Title: Homeopathic Treatment of Patients with Chronic Sinusitis - A Prospective Observational Study with 8 Years Follow-Up

Reviewer: Peter Fisher

Reviewer's report:

Reviewer:

- Discretionary Revisions

Only problems are some minor infelicities in the English, but these do not compromise its intelligibility

Author: The paper has now been edited by a native speaker.