Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 14 May 2009

Reviewer: Sarah Brien

Reviewer’s report:

General comments
This is a thoughtful sub-analysis of a larger observational study previously published. The rationale, methods and data are clearly described and defined. The limitations and boundaries of the study are adequately reported. The discussion needs further work and suggestions for improvement to the discussion are described below. Generally the writing was acceptable but some suggestions to improve its clarity have been made.

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS
1. Method section:
   a. The addition of subheadings would be preferable e.g. participants, outcome measures, statistical analysis
   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.
2. Discussion section,
   a. Page 10 line 3. This should be a new paragraph.

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?
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”
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.
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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

h. Page 7, paragraph 4 line 3; “the” is missing between “During the observation period…”

i. Page 8. Paragraph 2 line 3, replace = with “representing”

5. Conclusion.

a. Page 12, paragraph 2. Add “health” before the word “improvement” on line 2.

6. Tables

a. Table 1 Baseline population. Report that figures represent (% and N, unless otherwise stated)

b. Table 5. For clarity, alter the descriptor “Better by # 10%....<50% by “Better than 10% but <50%”

c. Table 6. Missing “t” in Patients using non-pharmaceutical treatments”. In addition there is a missing value, 0, in corticosteroids at 3 months
7. Figure 1.
   a. Nat-m is reported twice in the figure. Please amend as appropriate.
   b. In view of the general readership of this journal, please also report the full names to explain the abbreviations of homeopathic remedies cited.

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:

I declare that I have no competing interests