Reviewer's report

Title: Clinical Research Evidence of Cupping Therapy in China: A Systematic Literature Review

Version: 2 Date: 5 November 2010

Reviewer: Rainer Stange

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for quite a lot of improvement.

Further minor remarks:

Page 6 randomized clinical trials (RCTs)
Usually, RCT is an acronym for randomized controlled trial. I think none of the reviewers asked for a change?

I asked to explain Bi syndrome shortly.
You wrote in your letter
‘Wind, cold and dampness invading the body, which is caused by changeable climate and alternate cold and heat, or dwelling in damp places, or wading, or being caught in the rain, and linger in channels and joints resulting in Bi syndrome as the result of stagnation of qi and blood.’

which I like as an explanation, I don’t find it too lengthy, so if you are not at the word limit in your final version, I would like to see a more lengthy definition. Same still applies to description of deficiency. I think it is the wish of authors as well as the journal that also readers unfamiliar with TCM have a benefit from reading.

Page 10 I read it like this:
Twelve out of the top 20 conditions in this review, 12 of them were pain related conditions, including pain,
this is almost pleonastic, so maybe it should read … 12 of them were pain related, including
 generalized pain ???
 undefined chronic pain ???
 chronic widespread pain ????
 In any way, another formulation than merely pain.

Page 12 no trial of 73 RCTs none of the 73 RCT ....
Page 13 Estimate effect in RCTs
Better: ‘Estimated effects’ of RCT’s with cupping
quantitative synthesis not synthesis:. Quantitative analysis or explicitly estimation of effect sizes..

Page 14 No included studies mentioned the serious adverse effects with related to cupping therapy in the study reports.
This is a new sentence. You should re-phrase it. I am pretty sure you mean it like that: Serious adverse effects were not reported in any of the trial publications.
Discussion instead of plural

Page 14 The major problems in the methods...
I would say you describe weaknesses or flaws of the trials thereafter, also I would prefer ‘methodology’ instead of methods, as it is the more superior term to also give a view on application of an established ‘method’ like an RCT

Page 16 this is apparently a new formulation:
…the therapeutic effect of TCM therapies for fibromyalgia. Based on a meta-analysis of two trials in this review
Please make it clear: is the whole meta-analysis made out of 2 trials? Then it would be unsuual to call it a meta-analysis, hardly a review. Or do you mean something like: 'sub-analysis of 2 out of the …trials of this meta-analysis. In any way, meta-analyiss and review are used in a confusing way.

Page 18 And
recently we searched PubMed again, finding two more newly-published-RCTs conducted outside China, which is very encouraging. One trial [895]
This was just a suggestion, thank you for incorporating. But you should make it clear, whether the time limit of your systematic retrieval is December 2008 or October 2010. If you stick to 2008, which would make sense me, you should just mention further activiteis, which is legitimate when you discuss reusults of your research, maybe:
‘Meanwhile, two further RCT with cupping originating outside China (or explicitly from Iran and Germany) have been published, demonstrating increasing interest in this field…. or similarly.

This is merely a diagnostic study on the same study population you quoted as [88] originally ‘Brachialgia…’. So if you want to talk about therapy, the publication originally used as [88] is more important, if you want to also point to research into
the correlation between dysfunction of an organ and representation of this as change of state of subcutaneous soft tissue, this further publication may be mentioned in addition.

Thank you for taking these remarks into consideration