Reviewer's report

Title: Preliminary Examination of the Efficacy and Safety of a Standardized Chamomile Extract for Chronic Primary Insomnia: A Randomized Placebo-Controlled Pilot Study

Version: 1 Date: 24 June 2011

Reviewer: Alan Wade

Reviewer's report:

This is a well presented interesting study which has apparently been conducted to the highest scientific standards.

Major Compulsory Revisions

It is important that the authors address clearly the fact that this is a small but well conducted pilot study. In the statistical section on page 9 they specifically state "Thus, our goal was to determine the effect size and variability of chamomile compared to placebo to use for future sample size calculations."

1. It would be very important for future researchers that a discussion of study numbers required to adequately power a study was included somewhere within the paper.

2. While it is very interesting to discuss important findings such as the large change in sleep latency it would be important to make it clear that these findings are no more than passing observations. While it is clear on careful reading of the paper that the results are not statistically significant the conclusion in the abstract and the final paragraph of the paper both suggest that inference about the efficacy of chamomile can be drawn from these results.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Insomnia is a problem which increases with increasing age. It might be worth a sentence or two in the discussion about why an age limit of 65 was imposed. The abstract merely states "over 18", this should be corrected.

Discretionary Revisions

1. I do not know the half-life of chamomile but was interested that it was given twice daily and think it might be worth some discussion. Assessment has been made about daytime effects and these have been attributed to insomnia and its treatment. Perhaps some of the changes noted were due to daytime dozing with chamomile.

2. I would prefer the supplementary table to be included in the main manuscript.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
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'