Reviewer's report

Title: Effect of self-administered auricular acupressure on smoking cessation—a pilot study

Version: 1 Date: 1 November 2011

Reviewer: Cindy Crawford

Reviewer's report:

The authors do a thorough job in describing the past accomplishments in this field for the literature documentation and describing the need for this next step in the field of investigating whether auricular acupressure is effective for smoking cessation. The hypothesis is well stated and there is a clear direction of what is to be accomplished in this pilot study. Some concerns are marked below.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. has any of the included participants had any previous history of acupuncture for smoking cessation or acupuncture for any other condition that might allow for confounding the results? I think this should be documented in the inclusion criteria

2. During the run-in week, it seem that all participants should log previous cessation attempts and through which avenues they have made these attempts. It seems if participants were trying to quit just previous to this one week run-in period this could confound the results.

Minor essential revisions:

1. Not sure if the authors already plan this but not mentioned in the protocol, seems that randomization should be checked to make sure there is equal distribution between number of cigarettes smoked per day, history of pack-years, previous attempts to quit and method used and level of motivation in a table of characteristics to be checked and displayed in the study.

2. Also addressing the control and consultation that this group receives and the effect of that. Seems to me that the other two groups should also be receiving this in their groups as the "attention" that those participants receive could be a powerful influence for cessation

3. There is no mention of the research assistant and nurse intentions when applying the ear placements. Could an intention be important here to influence a placebo effect?

minor essential revisions: please check tense of wording

Otherwise, I believe this is a promising protocol provided there is enough power to show an effect given only 20 subjects per group.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

no competing interests