Reviewer's report

Title: Construction of a Traditional Chinese Medicine syndrome-specific outcome measure: The Kidney Deficiency Syndrome questionnaire (KDSQ)

Version: 3 Date: 27 October 2011

Reviewer: darong wu

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions:
Background: For the background section, I believe that the Kidney Deficiency Syndrome Questionnaire (KDSQ) is useful in describing individual's health status, i.e. similar as a diagnostic instrument. However, I'm not quite sure whether it could be used, as the author stated, to evaluate the efficacy of TCM therapies. Effect size of KDS-Yin, KDS-Yang and their domains listed in table 3 may partly explain my concerns. For deficiency heat domain of KDS-Yin and deficiency cold domain of KDS-Yang the effect size is close to or even less than 0.2 (which means that the ES is small). Moreover, the author shall explain clearly that KDSQ belongs to which type of instrument. Is it a diagnostic one or an evaluative one? For if it is a diagnostic instrument, accepted levels of sensitivity and specificity to avoid as much as possible the rates of false negative or false positive are important. But if it is an evaluative instrument, it shall be good at detecting changes.

Minor essential revisions:
Method: In page 7, 3rd paragraph, the “…IFI were equal to or greater than 0.09”, here it shall be “0.90”.

Result: The author shall show the detailed results from EFA and from SEM using figures or tables.

Discussion: In the discussion section, the sentence “construction of the KDSQ was evidence-based…” might not be proper. If the author wants to make this conclusion, he/she shall prove that the results either from exploratory factor analysis (EFA) or from structural equation modeling (SEM) are robust. Only women and those who were middle-aged with menopausal symptoms were included, external validity of the results is limited. The author shall state this point in the limitation part.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.