Reviewer's report

Title: Effects of a Brief Qigong-based Stress Reduction Program (BQSRP) in a distressed Korean population: a randomized trial

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Reviewer: Hector W.H. Tsang

Reviewer's report:

This is a study on testing the effectiveness of mind-body intervention on reducing stress of those suffering from symptoms of stress. An advantage of this study is that it covered both psychological and physiological outcome measures. Although the paper is well written in general, I have the following concerns that the authors need to revise before acceptance of publication may be granted:

1. The introduction is too brief. There have recently been a number of systematic reviews and meta-analytical studies on the use of qigong or other mind-body interventions for stress reduction. The authors need to include them in the revised introduction.

2. The authors used cortisol level as the physiological outcome measure. However, the introduction did not review the possible effects of mind body exercises on the HPA axis. The authors need to include this in the revised manuscript.

3. Altogether 50 participants were recruited with 25 participants in each group. I did not see any power analysis to justify the sample size. I guess that this may have explained why there was not change on the cortisol level.

4. As cortisol level follows a diurnal rhythm, it would be good to collect saliva samples at different times of the day. The authors may need to admit that this is one of their limitations.

5. The authors used “physical outcomes” to refer to cortisol level. I suggest that “physiological outcomes” would be more appropriate. We usually refer “physical outcomes” to ROM, muscle strength, etc.

6. The discussion the insignificant results of cortisol level on page 13-14 should be revised and expanded incorporating my advice given earlier.

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:

I declare that I have no competing interests