Reviewer's report

Title: Moxibustion in the management of irritable bowel syndrome: systematic review and meta-analysis

Version: 1 Date: 2 December 2012

Reviewer: Katja Boehm

Reviewer's report:

The reviewers managed to think out, plan and execute a very thorough and superbly written review and meta-analysis investigating the effects of moxibustion on patient-reported symptoms of IBS. The objective of the research has been well-defined; methods of achieving to answer the research questions were appropriate and also well-described in the paper. The paper follows relevant standards for reporting, adhering to the reporting style of the Cochrane Collaboration. The limitations of this specific meta-analysis and review and meta-analyses and reviews in general are stated in the discussion section, which is all together well-balanced and critical. They are supported by the data.

I am very happy to read that the authors also included high expectations due to cultural background. This I find very interesting and important to mention.

The writing of the paper is acceptable and title and abstract accurately represent the methods and results of the meta-analysis. Tables and graphs stand alone and are very informative and precise.

Major Compulsory Revisions
none

Minor Essential Revisions
1) In the limitation section is should be mentioned the risk of the results being biased through the application of the Likert scale. Here the desirability effect might have come into play where participants might want to please the investigator / therapist.

2) When reporting the I2 of 8% and 0% the extreme heterogeneity of the trials becomes evident. This issue has been touched but should be elaborated on in the discussion section.

Discretionary Revisions
1) It is very difficult to separate the effect of a therapy – in this case moxibustion – if it is given in combination with another therapy – in this case acupuncture, pharmacological medication, herbal medication or psychotherapy. This has been mentioned by the authors but in my mind not been stressed sufficiently.

2) It would be nice for the Western world reader to know a little bit more about the process of a “typical” moxibustion session, although I understand that they all differ slightly.
3) Are there any references when discussing probable adverse events in the discussion section?

**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.