Reviewer's report

Title: A Randomised Multicentre Trial of Acupuncture in Patients with Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis - Study Intervention including Physician and Treatment Characteristics

Version: 2 Date: 30 October 2013

Reviewer: Misha Cohen

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions
I just suggest that there be a review by a native English speaker as there is a bit of awkwardness. However overall this reads well.

Comments
1. Is the question posed original, important and well defined?
The question is great. It is important for us to know exactly what was covered in the study. In the US, this will help with insurance companies to cover additional conditions including SAR which is usually denied.

2. The research question posed by the authors should be easily identifiable and understood.
It is very clear.

3. It is useful to both the editors and authors if reviewers comment on the originality and importance of the study within the context of its field. If the research question is unoriginal because related work has been published previously, please give references.
This is original work and is very important to the field, not only because if this study but as an example for others to follow. The CONSORT guidelines were followed very clearly.

4. Reviewers should ask themselves after reading the manuscript if they have learnt something new and if there is a clear conclusion from the study.
I learned quite a bit, primarily as a researcher. This helped me to identify how the study was run, how much the details count. It confirms the use of Chinese diagnosis and individual treatment can be used in a study format that can then guide daily practice and comes from daily practice. that is incredibly useful to practitioners.

Are the data sound and well controlled?
Yes

If you feel that inappropriate controls have been used please say so, indicating the reasons for your concerns, and suggesting alternative controls where appropriate. If you feel that further experimental/clinical evidence is required to substantiate the results, please provide details.
I think this is not the purpose of this article.

Is the interpretation (discussion and conclusion) well balanced and supported by the data?
Yes.

The interpretation should discuss the relevance of all the results in an unbiased manner. Are the interpretations overly positive or negative?
They are well balanced. Discussion of the number of needles in the sham versus verum was important.

Conclusions drawn from the study should be valid and result directly from the data shown, with reference to other relevant work as applicable. Have the authors provided references wherever necessary?

Great references.

Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to allow others to evaluate and/or replicate the work?
Yes, more than enough.

Please remark on the suitability of the methods for the study, which should be clearly described and reproducible by peers in the field.

I thought it was rather brilliant and I think it takes a lot of effort but is able to replicate clinic practice more than many other studies.

If statistical analyses have been carried out, specify whether or not they need to be assessed specifically by an additional reviewer with statistical expertise.

No

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the methods?
The control over how many needles used should have been better.

Please comment on any improvements that could be made to the study design to enhance the quality of the results. If any additional experiments are required, please give details.

None

If novel experimental techniques were used please pay special attention to their reliability and validity.

None

Can the writing, organization, tables and figures be improved?
They are kind of long but readable

Although the editorial team may also assess the quality of the written English, please do comment if you consider the standard is below that expected for a scientific publication.

OK

If the manuscript is organized in such a manner that it is illogical or not easily accessible to the reader please suggest improvements.
This follows well

Please provide feedback on whether the data are presented in the most appropriate manner; for example, is a table being used where a graph would give increased clarity?

No real changes

Are the figures of a high enough quality to be published in their present form?

Yes

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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