Reviewer’s report

Title: What is Traditional Acupuncture? Exploring goals and processes of treatment in the Context of Women with Early Breast Cancer

Version: 4 Date: 10 April 2014

Reviewer: Cheryl Ritenbaugh

Reviewer’s report:

This revised manuscript now poses a clear question and provides an interesting answer. The methods are clearly described and appropriate. The results appear to be sound. Unfortunately, the Discussion begins to wander and contains some sentences that are incomprehensible. The Conclusion also is incomprehensible. There are minor typos and grammatical problems in other parts of the paper that are easily fixed. The Discussion and Conclusion require a bit more careful revision.

Mandatory compulsory revisions:

1. P. 12: Discussion: Second sentence: “What the outturn…” What does this sentence mean. This is not a good sentence – please revise.

2. P.13: top: “This again provides contrast with THESE findings..” What findings? Please revise to clarify.

3. P. 13: Sentence beginning “Furthermore..” is a sentence fragment; please revise.

4. P. 13 paragraph 2: Sentence beginning “This was very important…” The sentence contradicts itself; please revise for clarity.

5. P. 12 final paragraph: “This suggests that, where the outcome is complex, it may be difficult to conduct an explanatory model of research without considerable compromise to model validity, and estimates of effect size, especially where the ways in which change might be brought about are not made explicit, are unclear or unknown.” What do the authors mean by “conduct an explanatory model of research”? Is this in reference to an RCT? The sentence is confusing. This final sentence is crucial and in its current version makes no sense. Please end the paper with a positive statement about what this paper contributes rather than a negative statement about what cannot be done.

Minor essential revisions:

6. P. 9 first line: remove “of”; should read (I believe) “one woman”

7. P. 10: discussion of “silent information”: Do pulses also count in this category
of "silent information"? Pulses should be addressed either as part or not part of "silent information".

8. P. 10 bottom: reference to “3rd interview” should indicate “post-treatment” (if that is indeed the situation) and if you know how long post-treatment, please add that information.

9. P. 11, last paragraph: “women placed considerable value OF aspects…” Of should be “on”.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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'