Reviewer's report

Title: Six-month effects of integrative treatment, therapeutic acupuncture and conventional treatment in alleviating psychological distress in primary care patients - follow up from an open, pragmatic randomized controlled trial

Version: 1
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Reviewer: Frauke Musial

Reviewer's report:

The authors present new data from a 6 month follow up of a previously published trial. Even though this is a second publication out of one trial, I still find the data interesting. The research question is well defined, clinically relevant, and actual and the cited literature represents the field and displays an adequate knowledge of the research topic. The data appear to be sound and are well presented. The paper is very well written and title and abstract accurately convey what has been found. The methods uses are appropriate and well described. The discussion and conclusion are generally supported by the data and balanced, while the limitations of the work are clearly stated. I would, however, like the authors to discuss two more potential limitations (see below).

Discretionary revisions
1) In order to really distinguish the acupuncture effect from the additional effect of the salutogenetic dialogue, a control group which receives only the salutogenetic dialogue and no acupuncture is missing. The design is not completely balanced. The data are still highly relevant, but this is a shortcoming that needs to be discussed as it makes the interpretation of the data more difficult.

2) The two interventions TA and IT are very intense with regard to the attention the patients receive. On the other hand is the CT group very heterogeneous with regard to attention (e.g. watchful waiting vs. psychoeducational therapies). Is it not possible that the patients in CT, who receive higher attention (e.g. in a psychological intervention) also show greater improvements? The authors comment that, due to the small sample size, no subgroup analysis was possible, but I would at least like them to discuss this point.

Minor Essential Revisions
3) Figure 2 does not live up to the usual standard of this paper and should be revised. It is very difficult to read in its present form.

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