Reviewer’s report

Title: Use of phytoestrogens and effects perceived by postmenopausal women: result of a questionnaire-based survey

Version: 1 Date: 25 April 2014

Reviewer: Mei-Hua Huang

Reviewer’s report:

This is a survey of phytoestrogen supplement use and negative and positive perceptions after use.

Major comments:

- How duration of use was assessed? It was not in the questionnaire. Since their results were based on stratification of duration, it is important to give more details on the Please state in the Methods.

- How menopause (peri- vs. post) was ascertained including ‘how long since postmenopause’? It was also not in the questionnaire. Please state in the Methods. Women may suffer from some menopausal symptoms more during peri-menopause. Studies have shown a critical window of therapeutic opportunity, suggesting that duration of hormone deprivation may affect the beneficial effects of phytoestrogens. Thus, suggest the authors check the data by menopausal status and/or duration since menopause.

- How different the phytoestrogen dosages are of the 25 phytoestrogen-containing supplements? Do they contain mainly isoflavones or some could have lignans only or coumstan? Isoflavones have been studied the most for VMS. Different composition and dosage may affect the participants’ perceptions. Please describe more details about the supplements in methods or results

Minor comments:

- Questionnaire:
  Q6: ‘qualification’ is not a proper translation, when this is actually the educational level
  Q11: I think ‘have you ever had….’ is what the authors were asking. And it should be ‘high blood pressure’ not ‘high pressure’.
  Q14: ‘From the beginning of treatment….’ – is this the timeframe that the authors were really asking? If it is, then I don’t think people would likely report they feel the effects right away.

Recommendation: Resubmission after major revision.