Reviewer’s report

Title: Pain management with acupuncture in osteoarthritis: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Version: 3 Date: 15 March 2014

Reviewer: Huijuan Cao

Reviewer’s report:

This is a well-conducted systematic review, with appropriate methods. Authors provided a well designed study protocol and thoroughly considered the potential bias during the research process. There are only several suggestions for minor revisions of the manuscript.

1. In discussion section, authors mentioned the main “findings are clinically irrelevant and not merely an issue of judgement”, however, the conclusion just concluded the “significant reductions in pain intensity, improvement in functional mobility and quality of life”. Please revise it to properly explain the meaning of clinical and statistical difference between groups in this study.

2. According to the subgroup analysis, we can get information of how long the intervention used may have better effect, which is useful for the clinician. If possible, please provide more information about the clinical characteristics of acupuncture which concluded from the included studies. Such as which were the most frequently (eg. top 5) used acupuncture points, though electro-stimulation was not observed in this study, how about the usage of handle stimulation in included studies?

3. Please provide the unit of VAS and other outcome measurements in the text.

4. In Table 1, some included trials employed “usual care” as control therapy, please gives details of “usual care” for each of them in the table.

5. Authors demonstrated the difference between the current review and other previous reviews of this topic, I just felt it would be better if they can list the main findings of those reviews.

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.