Reviewer’s report

Title: Acupuncture for Chronic Pelvic Inflammatory Disease: a Qualitative Study of Patients’ Insistence on Treatment

Version: 3 Date: 30 January 2014

Reviewer: He Yu

Reviewer’s report:

>- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. There are some language corrections before being published.

2. There are some inappropriate quotations which should be more cautious concerned with before published as below.

Manuscript: “I, I am afraid that I would lose the ability to have babies. My husband has always loved children. Without fertility, I think my life is uncompleted. After deliberating with my family, they all support me…” (C3)

Reviewer: what do the authors want to convey about “My husband has always loved children. Without fertility, I think my life is uncompleted. After deliberating with my family, they all support me…” is there anything relative with responsibility or support from family? It calls for more processing.

Manuscript: As typical examples in the reproductive age, they put the needs of pregnancy and child first. Acupuncture gave them a hope of recovery and did not bring side-effect, as they were informed by their friends or relatives. Though they recuperate their health, they will continue treatment to achieve the optimal body condition for childbearing.

Reviewer: Quotations are needed for supporting this point.

Manuscript: Acupuncture met their requirement in terms of integrated effect. “I prefer therapy of TCM expressly acupuncture. As you know, I'm already more than 40 years old, in complex state of body, in fear of developing serious gynecological disease by chronic sickness. Actually, I don't think…” (C8)

Reviewer: unclear language: “in complex state of body”.

Reviewer: “Actually, I don't think…” the words followed by “actually” should always be very important, what the authors want to convey by quote “Actually, I don’t think…”?

Manuscript: “I like, oh, I mean, her attitude towards patients, although the effect has not reached my expectation to certain extent…” (C7)

Reviewer: how many patients take this point of view?
Manuscript: “Before treatment, the doctor tells me that needling combined with moxibustion is better for my condition. Ok, then I try. After about 3 therapies, I feel better than before and ever my abdomen feels a sensation of chill…” (C11)

Reviewer: Is “feeling a sensation of chill’ a good feeling? Need to explain to make sense.

Manuscript: “Meet the same people” in the clinic sounds like a placebo effect for these patients. Mutual support is gained by each other as a complement from the doctor.

Reviewer: Need quotations to support this point.

>&- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Manuscript: In this study, some basic outcomes such as changes in intensity and frequency of pelvic pain, cycle of menstruation, and rate of pregnancy were measured.

Reviewer: the authors actually did not report these outcomes in the manuscript.

2. Manuscript: Eligibility was based on the following criteria: (a) a history of chronic PID[2], (b) a course of acupuncture more than 3 months and no less than twice a week, and (c) traditional acupuncture conducted by Gong.

Reviewer: (1) what is the reference [2] for? (2) Since it is a purposive sampling study, it needs more explanations about “(c) traditional acupuncture conducted by Gong”, why not other acupuncturist? what is the purposive sampling strategy in this study? And more cautious discussion should be stated about how the participants report their outcome and feelings for they are all from Gong’s clinic and who is the second author, is there any reporting bias and what did the authors do to avoid it, for the participants may report the good feelings rather than side effect.

3. about the limitation

Reviewer: the data of this qualitative interview study are all from one acupuncturist’s clinic, one research setting; it should be discussed in the limitation about the generalization of this study.

4. This is a small sampling study, when did the author decide to stop recruitment need to be stated.

5. It should be stated whether the participants received other treatment other than acupuncture for Chronic Pelvic Inflammatory Disease. And the effect are caused by acupuncture or acupuncture combined with other treatment?

6. How did the author interview the participants? Face to face, one by one? It should be stated in the method.

7. There is some inconsequence, it should be more cautious to keep consistency in the manuscript.
(1)“The acupuncturist’s attitude towards them was an essential factor to their insistence on treatment. Sometimes they thought the attitude was more vital than the medical skill.” Vs “Based on this theory, the outcome not only improves the main symptoms but also associates symptoms. Those women said that some relevant phenomena were improved beyond expectation during the treatment. It could be the only answer to the patients’ insistence on treatment without effect on their chronic PID.”

Reviewer: and what is the reason for such patients to insist acupuncture if they did not get effect on their chronic PID? It is interesting to discuss and deeply process.

(2)“Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author who had been trained in conducting qualitative study and interviews.”(in background) Vs “The first author conducting the interview should be trained and practiced sufficiently to lessen and control the bias.”(in limitation)

8. How many codes did the authors achieve? And how did the author achieve subtheme, then theme?

9. Definitions need to be stated for each theme according to the raw data.

10. Manuscript: It was reported that most LBP patients visiting physical doctors do not clearly understand acupuncture.

Reviewer: what is “LBP”? there is no more information in the context.

11. Manuscript: Specific effect and non-specific effect are distinct but not divisible.

Reviewer: what is “Specific effect” and “non-specific effect”? It needs to be explained in discussion or result, rather than just raised in conclusion.

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.