Reviewer’s report

Title: A complementary method to detect qi vacuity

Version: 2 Date: 24 November 2008

Reviewer: Hyejung Lee

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached.

It is very interesting to open the possibility of complementary method to measure qi vacuity in this study. However, the author should consider the following comments.

1. The symptoms of Qi vacuity include spontaneous sweating. In general, increased sweating might enhance the electrical conductance in the skin. However, this study showed that the severity of QV produced the decreased skin electrical conductance. The author should address this point.

2. ARDK is an electrical device to detect the skin conductance of 24 special acupuncture points of meridians on wrists and ankles. Are these points source points? It is necessary to specify the location of the acupuncture points with figure. Moreover, in order to understand the devices, it would be better to display the diagram of the ARDK.

3. ARDK calculates the mean value of skin conductance in 24 acupoints automatically. However, it is possible that the change of skin conductance in the specific meridian would represent the specific illness. It is necessary to compare the skin conductance in each meridian.

4. Healthy subjects might also have the symptoms of Qi vacuity including fatigued spirit with lack of strength, shortness of breath accompanied by laziness to speak, spontaneous sweating, enlarged tongue with or without dental impressions, and a vacuous and weak pulse. The author had better compare the degree of QV between the patients and healthy subjects.

5. The decreased mean value of ARDK with the scores of 5 symptoms/ signs and age as independent variable showed that, only the degrees of fatigue and weak pulse have contributed to the decreased mean value of ARDK. The author should address the possible reasons for the other three symptoms.

6. There might be a confounding factor of gender. How did you control this possible factor?
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.