Reviewer's report

**Title:** Effect of a Proprietary Magnolia and Phellodendron Extract on Stress Levels in Healthy Women: a pilot, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 11 January 2008

**Reviewer:** Uwe Koetter

**Reviewer's report:**

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1) It is helpful to provide a definition of the ITT population. It is surprising that the ITT population (40 subjects) is bigger than the safety population (39 subjects).

2) The “last observation carried forward” (LOCF) approach needs to be reviewed as the ITT might include participants, who have not provided a first set of data.

3) In table 2 and 3 the numbers for the changes in the placebo group between screening and week 6 do not add up. The authors may wish to review the numbers for these tables.

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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) One can expect that the average reader understands abbreviations like SSRI and OTC. However, abbreviations like DSM, CES, STAI are better spelled out, when used for the first time.

2) Page 7, 2nd paragraph, 2nd line: ... self reported increased eating ... is probably correct

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1) For this intervention study a per-protocol evaluation appears to be justified as it might provide additional insights into the effect size.

**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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