Reviewer's report

Title: Study on the Evaluation of the Clinical Effects of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Heart Failure by Complex Intervention: Protocol of SECETCM-HF

Version: 4 Date: 23 October 2009

Reviewer: John Cleland

Reviewer's report:

The proposed study is an adaptation of a conventional RCT to Chinese Medicine on a background of conventional evidence-based medicine.

As far as I can see they propose to give IV medication initially or fructose injection as a placebo. It is not clear that the injection regimens are the same and this should be clarified.

Thereafter, the patients will take Chinese medicine or placebo (I assume these are visually identical but it does not say so) for 6 months.

Final follow-up will be at 12 months.

Information of the security of blinding is inadequate.

The study is too small to be definitive and the authors should be cautious about any sweeping conclusions from its results. It will need replicated in a study with several thousand patients if there is evidence of benefit.

The clarity of the writing and the figures could be improved to show better when placebo will be used. The flow diagram should show where and how placebo and active medication will be given.