Author's response to reviews

Title: Quality of reporting of trials abstracts needs to be improved: using the CONSORT for abstracts to assess the four leading Chinese medical journals of traditional Chinese medicine

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Minor essential revision

1. The authors state that they want to assess and compare the reporting quality of both Chinese and English abstracts in four leading TCM journals. It is not clear why they chose TCM as opposed to other Chinese journals and why only four. It is not clear if these are the only ones indexed in Medline- if so that is reasonable.

- We only chose TCM journals due to:
  1. TCM is widely used in China and its benefits are also gradually being recognized worldwide. It is very important that abstracts of TCM RCTs provide accurate and precise information of the trial participants, interventions, methodology and the importance of the trial results to help health professionals making decision, especially for those non-Chinese speaking countries where the English abstract may be the only way for them to know about RCTs of TCM;
  2. As we know, someone else already assessed the quality of reporting of abstracts published on Chinese journals of West medicine, so we only chose TCM journals in order to avoid duplication.
- There are only 5 TCM journals indexed in Medline based on the 2007 PubMed Citations. We selected only 4 because the main interests of the other one “Chinese Traditional and Herbal Drugs” are chemical ingradient, process, cultivation, quality and laboratory study of herbal medicine and are not relevant to our study.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

- The methods are straightforward and what would be expected for this type of Project

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

- The results are simple number counts with a percentage this seems to be a reasonable approach

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

- I am not sure that this is relevant for this type of study

We think current standards for reporting is not relevant to our study because this is a research on methodology, not a research article.
Discretionary revision

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   • Yes though the overall result is that the journals don’t do very well, this is not a surprise. There is some attempt to place these results in context but it is still hard to know whether Chinese journals are worse, the same as or better than say western complementary medicine journals.
   Since we did not find papers assessing the quality of reporting of abstracts published on western complementary medicine journals, comparison can not be made.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   • Generally this has been done. Suggest that the term ‘Consort’ is added to the title.
   The title was revised as: “Quality of reporting of trials abstracts needs to be improved: using the CONSORT for abstracts to assess the four leading Chinese medical journals of traditional Chinese medicine”

7. Is the writing acceptable?
   • Yes generally well written. Would benefit from some copy editing.

Discretionary revision

General comment
It would be valuable to formally inform the TCM journal editors of this work and seek to improve the current situation by discussion. While this paper will be of some interest to western readers, this data should also be published in China.
If the copyright is not a problem, we would like to also publish the data in China after it is published first in “Trials”.

**Level of interest**: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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'