Reviewer's report

**Title:** A randomized controlled trial of acupuncture to treat functional constipation: design and protocol

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 14 May 2012

**Reviewer:** John Norrie

**Reviewer's report:**

The authors have responded to the outstanding query about the sample size calculation. However, it is still not transparently clear what they have done. It is important to include sufficient detail that the interested reader can follow and replicate the sample size calculation. So suggest they make sure at least the following information is included ‘Using GPower 3.1.3, and inputting the 4 group mean defecation rates as 4.0, 3.8, 5.2, and 2.6 per week, with a common assumed standard deviation of 6.0, gives a calculated effect size of 0.15. With 4 groups of equal size of 175/group (700 total) this gives the study 90% power at a 5% level of significance to detect such an overall effect size using an one-way ANOVA fixed effects omnibus test, and assuming a 15% loss to follow up. For the pairwise comparison of primary interest – Shu-Mu-He vs. mosapride citrate – the study has over 90% power at a 1% level of significance (to make some adjustment for multiple comparisons) to detect a mean difference of 2.6 (5.2 – 2.6) assuming the common standard deviation of 6.0 defecations with 175/group.'