Author's response to reviews

Title: Comparing the effects of individualized, standard, sham and no acupuncture in the treatment of knee osteoarthritis: a multicenter randomized controlled trial

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Thank you for your review and comments.

I have modified the manuscript according to the comments of the reviewer.

The major modifications are as follows:

a) On page 15, the Trial Status should be expanded a bit. It should indicate if participant enrollment is still being done and approximately when the enrollment and trial completion is expected.

Trial status: ongoing trials

Modifications were made as follows:

Subject enrollment is still being done. Enrollment and trial completion is expected to be finished by the end of 2013

b) On page 10, the sentence about the “no acupuncture treatment group” is in the past tense and implies that enrollment has ended. Is that true? [This question is asking to change the tense if the trial is still ongoing]

Subjects in this control group received no treatments, but were assessed at each visit

Modifications were made as follows:

Subjects in this control group will receive no acupuncture treatments, but will be assessed at each visit.

c) There are four treatment groups. Will there be just one overall analysis or will each control group be compared with the individualized treatment group? If the latter, why is there no adjustment for multiple comparisons (the alpha is set at two-sided 0.05)? The analysis plan could be explained a bit more.

The primary analysis will be performed using ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) overall. If there is a statistically significant difference, then a multiple comparison method (Tukey, Duncan's method, etc) can be used to look for specific differences between pairs of groups. Thus there is no need to adjust for multiplicity.

d) In the Discussion, last paragraph, it is clear that the authors hope that the individualized therapy
will prove beneficial. That is a reasonable hope, but it would be preferable to be a bit more objective as to the expected outcome.

In conclusion, we hope that this study will validate the efficacy and encourage the widespread use of acupuncture therapy. Specifically, we seek to show that individualized, meridian-based syndrome differentiation and Sa-am acupuncture is even more effective than standard acupuncture treatment. Moreover, this study aims to establish that the Korean method of individualized diagnosis and treatment can be tested clinically and reproduced in future studies.

Modifications were made as follows:
In conclusion, this research involves three different controls, it will help elucidate the efficacy of individualized acupuncture versus standard, sham and no acupuncture groups.

e) Title
Please ensure the title conforms to journal style for study protocol articles. Effects of individualized acupuncture on patients with osteoarthritis of the knee: protocol of a multicenter randomized controlled trial.

Modifications were made as follows:
Comparing the effects of individualized, standard, sham and no acupuncture in the treatment of knee osteoarthritis: a multicenter randomized controlled trial.

f) Please remove the tables from the main body of your manuscript.
As suggested, the tables have been placed at the back of the manuscript.