Reviewer’s report

Title: Effectiveness of Acupuncture Intervention for Cervical Spondylosis of Cervical Type
Study Protocol for a Randomized, Double-blind Placebo-controlled Trial

Version: 1 Date: 16 February 2013

Reviewer: Zhaohui Liang

Reviewer’s report:

The article is about a study protocol of a RCT for cervical spondylosis of cervical type. The paper needs revision at the following aspects before it is considered to be published.

1. The diagnosis of cervical spondylosis of cervical type needs to be revised in accordance with international standard. Cervical spondylosis of cervical type is a Chinese old style diagnosis. In the International Disease Classification (ICD-10), the corresponding diagnosis should be M47.8 (other spondylosis # cervical spondylosis), or neck pain caused by cervical spondylosis.

2. The sample size calculation basis is questionable. The sample size is calculated by the parameters from a low quality article published in Chinese (Reference 21). In contrast, in the previous work (e.g. Salter GC, Roman M, Bland MJ, MacPherson H. Acupuncture for chronic neck pain: a pilot for a randomised controlled trial. BMC Musculoskelet Disord. 2006 Dec 9;7:99., or Liang ZH, Di Z, Jiang S, Xu SJ, Zhu XP, Fu WB, Lu AP. The optimized acupuncture treatment for neck pain caused by cervical spondylosis: a study protocol of a multicentre randomized controlled trial. Trials. 2012 Jul 9;13:107.), in order to reach a significant level of 0.05 and power of 0.90, the sample of each group must exceed 200.

3. The format of the reference does not comply with the requirements of BMC. I recommend the authors use the Endnote software to revise the reference session.

4. The authors claimed they followed the CONSORT and STRICTA guideline to report their study. However, they refereed two STRICTA guidelines (Reference 32 & 33) which are actually two versions of STRICTA. Please articulate which version they follow. And according to STRICTA 2010 (i.e. Reference 33), the details of needling and other components of treatment should be described. (Referring to http://www.stricta.info/checklist.htm).

5. The authors stated they used SAS 8.12 for randomization and SAS 9.2 for statistical analysis. Please explain why they used two different versions and if they really did so, please provide a proof document of their SAS license.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I hereby state that I have not in the past five years received any reimbursements, fees, funding or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript. I do not hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript. I do not hold and I am not currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript. I have not received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript. I have no financial competing interests. I have no non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper. Therefore, I declare that I have no competing interests.