Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of conventional medicine, TCM treatment and combination of both conventional medicine and TCM treatment for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: study protocol of a randomized comparative effectiveness research trial

Version: 2 Date: 4 March 2014

Reviewer: Myeong Soo Lee

Reviewer's report:

1. Inclusion criteria are very broad and these should be considered during the randomization. However, there are no details in the stratification. Is there any reason to include wide range of age for COPD patients? The authors also consider the other habits for increasing the symptoms of COPD such as smoking and the environment of center (air pollution in the recruited regions).

2. What is GOLD? Please spell it out and add the page numbers for reviewers.

3. The authors said they will give three different drugs for patients as shown in table 1. Why will the authors do like that? Is there any rule for using this? Furthermore, the TCM groups will be received four different TCM treatment according to their pattern. It seems to complicate for analyzing the results. In the case of TCM-CM group, the possible combination will be 16 different treatments. Is there any plan to do sub-analysis for this point?

4. The author noted that they will do economic evaluation. I am not sure they can do this with this design. Please add the details for this. Do the authors think it is pragmatic RCT? Only four herbal formula use in real clinical field. How to calculate whole expenses for this?

5. Does full analysis set mean intention-to-treat analysis?

6. Please add the related type of pattern for each TCM treatments in table 2.

7. Figure 1. Please see the CONSORT flow diagram and change this according to that.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 declare that I have no competing interests.