Author’s response to reviews

Title: Effectiveness of acupuncture for breast cancer related lymphedema: Protocol for a single-blind, sham-controlled, randomized, multicenter trial

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Dr. Tom Rowles and Dr. Yan Zhang:

Thank you very much for valuable and helpful comments in your reply.
We have studied comments carefully and tried our best to revise the manuscript. Revised parts are marked in red in the paper. The point-to-point responses to the reviewers’ comments are listed as following:

Response to Dr. Yan Zhang:

The revision has addressed my concerns in general. There are a few minor editing I would suggest the authors to consider.

Question 1. Please make sure the tense in the manuscript is correct. For instance, p4 line 9-10, "The recruitment will start from December, 2016 and end in October, 2019 synchronously in the three centers", should it be "The recruitment would start from December, 2016 and will end in October, 2019 synchronously in the three centers".

Response: We have modified this sentence. Thank you very much for your comment.

Question 2. P4, Line15-16: A standard care is what the patient receives regarding less if he/she is in a study or in the real/sham acupuncture group, it is not a choice or ethical consideration. If the decongestive therapy is INDEED all the patients receive, I suggest reword the sentence as "all participants will receive the same standard care of decongestive therapy". If the decongestive therapy is NOT received by all patients, then try to use the term usual care. You study design actually is real acupuncture+usual care vs. sham acupuncture+usual care.

Response: Thank you very much for your comment. Indeed, all the patients in this study would receive the same standard care of decongestive therapy. And as suggested, we all agreed to reword all the sentences in this manuscript concerning decongestive therapy from “a standard decongestive therapy” to “the same usual care of decongestive therapy”.

Question 3. P.8 Line 21-27, please consider moving this up to the section of "patient health monitoring" on p7, or following P8, Line 11 "Adverse Event", as the content is not related to QoL outcome. Please note safety is listed as your primary study aim P3 line 42, but AE is your secondary outcome, which is not really consistent.

Response: Thank you very much for your suggestion. We have move this paragraph to the "Patient health monitoring" part. And as suggested, we modified the sentence in P3 line 42 concerning our primary study aim, which now reads “we aim to evaluate the effectiveness of acupuncture for the treatment of BCRL”.
Question 4. P8, line 33-37, the sentence seems incomplete.

Response: Thank you very much for your comment. We have revised this sentence, which now reads “Next we input the parameters above, set the alpha risk (α, type 1 error risk) and beta risk (β, type II error risk) at 0.05 and 0.2 respectively, and choose “t test from two independent groups” and “A Priori: Compute required sample size given α, power and effect size”, then after calculating, the required sample size is 164 (Additional file A2).”

All the authors are very grateful for your careful and hard work on our manuscript. We hope our responses will meet your requirements. If you have any queries, please feel free to contact us.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Shengming Dai