Author’s response to reviews

Title: Potential effectiveness of Chinese herbal medicine Yu ping feng san for adult allergic rhinitis: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers very much for the opportunity to resubmit our research article and the constructive comments and corrections. We have carefully addressed the comments from the editorial board and the reviewers.

Changes made to the manuscript are shown as highlighted in the text.

Below listed are the revisions we have made according to the Editor and reviewers’ comments: We would like to express our great appreciation to you and reviewers for comments on our paper. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you and best regards.

Yours sincerely,

Qiulan Luo

Corresponding author:
Response to comments:

Reviewer 1:

This study is a systematic review and meta-analysis of a Chinese herbal formula YPFS in the treatment of allergic rhinitis. This paper has some limitations.

1. The first is that the literature review is not sufficient. The search strategy did not include any thesis or conference abstract, the literature review should be updated within 6 months of the study submission not July 2015. Thus the included studies only 17 RCTs, which are not representative.

Response: Thanks for pointing this out. This review was conducted in late 2015, therefore the literature is now out of date. Following reviewer’s suggestion, we conducted an updated search and added the most recently published studies into this review, all results and discussion sections have also been updated accordingly. In addition, thesis or conference abstracts are considered in our database search and inclusion, this has been stated in the Methods section as “No limits on language and publication type were placed on study selection.” (see page 5, line 17-18).

2. The second is that the dosages of granules or pills of YPFS are not clearly presented and also their quality control methodology is not supplied.

Response: We have added the information of the dosages of granules or pills of YPFS into Table 2. As reviewer pointed out, the quality control methodology was not supplied by included studies. In fact, none of the included studies reported all items recommended by CONSORT 2010 and its Extension for Herbal Intervention. This has been added as one limitation into the discussion section (see page 18, line 8-9).

3. The third is that primary outcome which the study set was Total Nasal Symptom Scores but the results showed that only one among the 17 studies using individual nasal symptom scores as primary outcome so the conclusion of this study was not credible.

Response: We agree with reviewer’s comment. The lack of reporting of the primary outcome measure (Total Nasal Symptom Scores) is one of the limitations of this review. Therefore, the interpretation of results should be with caution. This has been addressed in the discussion section (see page 17, line 18-20).

4. The fourth is that the pharmacotherapy mentioned in this study was various and no dosage provided.
Response: We have added the dosage information into Table 1. We agree with reviewer’s comments that the pharmacotherapy used by included studies varied, therefore we conducted subgroup analyses according to different types of pharmacotherapy and tried to provide more detailed results to provide evidence for clinical practice.

Reviewer 2:

1. Overall, this is an excellent study. While there are limitations, the authors do a great job of stating them. The study was performed using high quality methodology. The comments are minor, and are mostly related to the writing. I tired of fixing grammar and English, so I just provided a few examples.

Response: Thanks for the suggestion. We had carefully checked the whole manuscript and corrected some grammatical errors. All changes are shown in red text in the manuscript.

2. The data is strong. It's a concern that many of the references cannot be verified, however, that's a result of the international nature of the manuscript. The figures look good.

Response: We agree with reviewer’s comment that many of the included studies cannot be verified since they were published in Chinese. We had tried our best to present the details of these studies in Table 1 and Table 2.

Further, we added an additional table (Table 3) to present results of all meta-analyses.