Reviewer’s report

Title: Efficacy of Chinese herbal medicine Zengru Gao to promote breastfeeding: a multicenter randomized controlled trial

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Reviewer: Angela Lupattelli

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review this manuscript. This is a randomized trial investigating whether the herbal remedy Zengru Gao was effective in promoting breastfeeding. The study is interesting, however there are some points that should be addressed by the authors.

I recommend a proper English language editing of the entire manuscript; several English words are not appropriately used, and parts of the text are difficult to understand.

Introduction:

Please consider adding some prevalence estimates about breastfeeding practices and length of breastfeeding in the Chinese population.

Page 1, lines 16-17: the authors cite a study on herbal galactagogues, and it would help to describe what herbs were mainly used for this purpose in that study.

In the aim the authors state that the study was conducted among "first time mothers", however this information is not reflected in the Methods as well as in the Results (cf. figures on parity in Table 1). Could you please clarify?

Methods:

Please consider adding some information about the recruitment centers; it seems that all were public hospitals, however are the areas where the hospital are located comparable in terms of socioeconomic status of the inhabitants, or are there great differences? This information seems essential since the authors are not reporting any results stratified by center, or even the number of women recruited in each center.

Is "Blank group" the correct terminology?
It is unclear to me how these women were approached for their potential inclusion in the study. Please clarify whether all women giving birth were asked to participate, how many women were asked, and thereby the response rate.

The description of the outcome measure is not extensive, and needs to be elaborated/clarified. It is unclear to me how the outcomes under study were ascertained; specifically, were the breastfeeding practices reported by the mothers?

Could the authors clarify the rationale/utility of the outcome defined as "partially breastfeeding"? Beyond, I feel this wording is not really appropriate.

My concern is that the authors are mainly measuring breastfeeding as a yes or no outcome, with no information about breast milk volume for instance. Since Zengru Gao is supposed to increase milk production, I feel this would be by far more important. Also, it should be specified for how long these women and their breastfeeding practices were followed-up. In the Results section the authors described results at Day 7, however how useful would this follow-up time be?

The paper does not contain any information about pharmacological properties of the herbal remedies under study; for instance, what is the induction time after oral administration of Zengru Gao for exerting its galactagogue effect?

The authors should clarify how long were these women hospitalized after delivery; if the follow-up time was 7 days, then it is expected that in some of these days women were at home, and no longer hospitalized. If this was the case, how did the research team control factors such as diet, drinking habits, used of medicines (both conventional and herbal)?

Another important note concerns the lack of any safety information about the breastfed children. Do the Zengru Gao components enter the breast milk, and if yes, what is the expected milk/plasma ratio? This aspect is not even addressed in the Discussion.

I feel the Discussion lacks important reflections, especially on same of the points raised above.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

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Quality of written English
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Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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