Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 29 Jun 2017

Reviewer: David M. Haas

Reviewer's report:

Please include all comments for the authors in this box rather than uploading your report as an attachment. Please only upload as attachments annotated versions of manuscripts, graphs, supporting materials or other aspects of your report which cannot be included in a text format.

In this revised manuscript, the authors again provide the results of their RCT comparing the herbal Zengru Gao to nothing in an effort to increase breastfeeding. The responses to the reviewer comments are well referenced and in general very responsive. Several of the items however are explained in the reviewer comment response but are not actually put into the text of the manuscript- for instance the response states the trial registry but they did not add that to the actual methods of the text. This really should be done. A few other comments/questions.

1. Table 2. It is odd that the only real results table covers a secondary outcome. it would be much better to have the primary outcomes- full breastfeeding, partial breastfeeding (reported by themselves and then as the combined outcome) in the main result table.

2. The authors clarified why women were excluded post-randomization. however, some of these reasons are not valid for excluding the women. For instance, it is noted that they were excluded if they could not be reached by telephone. Does this mean that they didn't have a way to contact the women or that they tried and were unable to? Either way, the women would be in the hospital and could have gotten results for day 1. Thus, they may not be analyzable for all time points but they would have valid data for day 1 and maybe 3. Also, the team should have known if there would be NO way for the women to be contacted during the screening process and thus they would have been excluded before randomization.

3. The same thing is asked about the women excluded for pumping. If a woman didn't start pumping until day 4, she would have data on outcomes at day 1 and 3 and those should have been included.

4. Full and partial breastfeeding should be reported individually as well as a composite.
5. Table 2- was formula consumed measured for all women? For those who were fully breastfeeding, i assume that their volume would be recorded as 0. The analysis should also be run only for women who were partial breastfeeding. That way the rates of full breastfeeding women are not confounding the comparison.

6. The overall conclusion of the paper that Zengru Gao "enhanced breastfeeding success" is still not supported by the data. The small improvement on day 3 is not seen at the end of the study on day 7. Thus the conclusion should rather be that the herb did not show a clear difference, although there was some improvement seen at day 3.

7. In the discussion, the authors again do not put in one of their response answers. Much of the high rate of success in this population may be attributable to the intensive counseling and following of the study nurse who was likely encouraging breastfeeding to all participants-hopefully no matter what group they were in. This might be an explanation for the high rates of succes and should be in the discussion.

8. The authors state that they did not record any complications in the control group. Please clarify (in the text) if this was that there were no complications in that group or if the study team just didn't ask women in the control group if they had any complications.

9. If a clinician was involved in determining if a side effect was due to the medication, was that person blinded to the group? I assume not and that it was a clinician who was involved with the study. This is a big problem with risk of bias. Thus it is really not valid to state there is no increase in adverse effects as it was not objectively evaluated.

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

Yes

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.

No
Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal