Reviewer’s report

Title: Pulsatile dry cupping in chronic low back pain - a randomized three-armed controlled clinical trial

Version: 0 Date: 23 Jan 2018

Reviewer: Mohamed Khalil

Reviewer's report:

General comments:

- Very interesting study on pulsatile cupping.

- My main concern is that although the study logically was designed to compare the regular and minimal pulsatile cupping the sample size was calculated to compare the cupping and the control. However, I think that authors covered this concern in the study limitation. Further studies may be designed as non-inferiority for example or using the effect size.

- The manuscript is focusing Germany as if back pain is only a problem in Germany. This is clear in the background section. Pulsatile cupping may be of interest to other countries which are using traditional cupping.

Specific:

Abstract:

- Please keep group labels consistently all over the manuscript; Pulsatile cupping, Minimal pulsatile cupping, and control.

- Background: lines 49-50; please add pulsatile "two different forms of pulsatile cupping."

Background:

- Back pain is a global problem; please reflect this in the background section with references, not only in Germany.

- Lines 33-36; cupping is widely used also in the Middle East.

- Lines 58-60: please update the reference as there is more than SR.
1. The effect of cupping therapy for low back pain: A meta-analysis based on existing randomized controlled trials.

Wang YT; Qi Y; Tang FY; Li FM; Li QH; Xu CP; Xie GP; Sun HT


2. Evaluation of Wet Cupping Therapy: Systematic Review of Randomized Clinical Trials.

Al Bedah AM; Khalil MK; Posadzki P; Sohaibani I; Aboushanab TS; AlQaed M; Ali GI


Cho HW; Hwang EH; Lim B; Heo KH; Liu JP; Tsutani K; Lee MS; Shin BC.

Methods:

- Partially blinded: please specify who was blinded.
- Please add a reference for back pain definition.
- Outcome measures: the primary outcome parameter. Do you mean the mean difference? Please rephrase it.
Results:

- Please revise Figure two; the minimal cupping group, 36 received intervention, four excluded, 33 analysed?? Is it 32?.

- Please explain if the plan was ITT, why you excluded "lost to follow" even after receiving the intervention.

- Add group "n" to the tables. Number of participants analysed In each group.

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.

Yes

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

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