Reviewer's report

Title: The efficacy and safety of acupuncture for cerebral vasospasm after subarachnoid hemorrhage: Study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

Version: 1  Date: 11 December 2014

Reviewer: Li Ying

Reviewer's report:

1. Will the study design adequately test the hypothesis?
   Yes.

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing?
   Yes.

3. Is the planned statistical analysis appropriate?
   Yes.

4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?
   No figures presented.

5. Is the writing acceptable?
   Yes.

Other comments:

1. The block size of randomization should not be reported in a protocol. Reporting it takes the risk of unblinding, by people who know how block works in a randomization, then they can pick the group they want.

2. The experimental group will actually receive electro-acupuncture and intradermal acupuncture. No need to repeat acupuncture separately, unless the acupuncture is specially manipulated. Otherwise, it may cause confusion.

3. The mock TENS is used without electrical stimulation, what will you do to maintain blinding if the patients have experience of electro-acupuncture? Will you exclude those patients in the screening phase?

4. In the primary outcome, how did you define “an unaccountable new focal neurological deficit”? Through specific symptoms and signs of the patients, or by TCD/CT/MRI, or by a neurological deficit scale assessment? This needs more details.

5. It will be easier to read if you provide a flow chart of the study.

6. Although the statistical analysis is technically correct, it misses lots of important information which might cause a biased result. For example, the
patients will receive conventional treatments that include different interventions and different dose of a specific medication between patients, so in your statistical model, if you could add these as covariates, it would be much better.