Reviewer's report

Title: Effect and neurophysiological mechanism of acupuncture in patients with chronic sciatica: Protocol for a randomized, patient-assessor blind, sham-controlled clinical trial

Version: 0 Date: 25 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Emily Peckham

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for asking me to review this protocol for an RCT please find below my comments.

1. Page 7, line 18 states 'with an additional 12 patients as the normal control group.' What is this group? It was my understanding that the control group was the sham acupuncture group. I am therefore not sure what the purpose of this group is and how it fits into the study design. Please can you clarify and remove reference to it if the group is not part of the study.

2. Item 10 of the exclusion criteria on page 9. Do you mean people lacking capacity to give informed consent?

SPIRIT checklist

3. Item 5b Study sponsor - please can you add these details either to the checklist or main manuscript. Although it is listed as appealing on page 2 there is no mention of the study sponsor on page 2.

4. Item 5c - please can you add details of this to the checklist or the manuscript, although this is listed as being on page 23 this information does not appear on page 23.

5. Item 21a Please add a brief explanation to the checklist about what a data monitoring committee is not require

6. Please upload ethical approvals from review board and evidence of funding as a supplementary file.

7. In the availability of data and materials heading on page 25 please state why this is not applicable. Do you have any plans for data sharing in the future.
**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Acceptable

**Quality of figures**

All images and figures within the manuscript should be genuine i.e. without evidence of manipulation. No specific feature within an image may be enhanced, obscured, moved, removed, or introduced. If you have concerns about the veracity of the figures you should choose the first option below.

**Statistical review**

Is it essential that this manuscript is seen by an expert statistician? If so, please give your reasons in your report.

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