Reviewer's report

Title: Acupressure Therapy and Liu-Zi-Jue Qigong for Pulmonary Function and Quality of Life in Patients with Severe Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia (COVID-19): study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 24 Jun 2020

Reviewer: Christina Easter

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for addressing the comments that I made. I am mostly satisfied with the answers, however there are a few aspects that I would like you to clarify.

*The English and subsequently the readability of this protocol has greatly improved. However in figure 1 "Flow chart of the trial" has a spelling error. Additionally in this figure the text is not in the same font and size. Please could the authors address this to ensure that the text is the same size and font. As I have found a spelling error I would like the authors to also go over the whole of the protocol again to ensure that there are no other spelling errors.

*The additional information that the authors have given about the intervention on page 6, lines 107-113, I feel needs a reference to the studies that have demonstrated that the Liu Zi Jue exercises have been successful in those whom have lung disease (even quantify how successful this intervention is from this study or studies). This reference is especially required as the authors state that 'previous studies have shown...'. It would also be preferable for the authors to be more specific about the lung disease they are referring to and how similar or different they are from pneumonia specifically as this study is looking at pneumonia.

*Thank you for adding in figures 3 and 4 to demonstrate the intervention, however it would be improved further if there were a caption for these figures to state what the diagrams are demonstrating e.g. the stages. Additionally, the quality of figure 4 especially needs to be improved.

*In the sample size section on page 16, I have tried to replicate the sample size value you have documented however I have not been able to given the information you have provided. Could the authors please review this further. It would also be useful to document the total sample size before accounting for the loss to follow up. Also if the authors could provide a rationale for why 20% loss to follow up is likely to happen or even a reference this would be more informative.

*Under the randomisation section at the top of page 17, could the authors please clarify what they mean by 'will open a continuous random envelop...'. Additionally, could the authors be clearer on the steps from identifying participants to when the participant is assigned to a treatment arm as currently this section contradicts itself. It would be helpful if the authors formed this section chronologically to ensure clarity for each of the steps.
*Under the statistical analysis section on page 18, the authors have clarified how they will deal with missing data, however it would be further helpful what method will be used instead of just stating ‘Multiple imputations will be used to impute missing data values…’. Additionally could the authors please clarify why they will be using Little's test, it is not clear what is being tested. It would also be helpful to reference Little's test too.

*Under the statistical analysis section on page 17, could the authors please split this into appropriate paragraphs or subsections as currently it does not read logically.

*Under the statistical analysis section on page 17, could the authors please pre-specify the characteristics that they will use for the adjusted analysis, although the authors have stated 'e.g. age, sex' it would be preferable to specifically give a definitive list especially as baseline measures are being taken.

*Under the statistical analysis section, it is still not clear how the primary outcome will be assessed as the authors just list a number of methods to be used. Please could the authors be more specific on which method will be used to assess the primary outcome given the treatment arms, and likewise for the secondary outcomes. Also the authors need to state which of the 2 time points is the primary endpoint for the primary outcome and if they plan on using the baseline measures in the analysis. This is really important and needs to be clear to the reader.

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