

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form ([see an example](#)) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below. Some articles will have been accepted based in part or entirely on reviews undertaken for other BMJ Group journals. These will be reproduced where possible.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Herbal medicine (Gan Mai Da Zao Decoction) for depression: a systematic review protocol
AUTHORS	Lee, Myeong Soo; Jun, Ji Hee; Lee, Ju Ah; Choi, Tae-Young; Yun, Kyung-Jin; Lim, Hyun-Ja

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Liu, Jianping Beijing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
REVIEW RETURNED	30-Aug-2013

THE STUDY	A PRISMA checklist would be helpful for the manuscript.
RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS	The manuscript is a protocol and there is no results or conclusion.
GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>In the introduction under description of the intervention, please provide more information about the dosage and formulation of the herbal medicine. Please describe if there is any product on market and if so, who authorise the product. Please provide more information about the prevalence of its use and give some references of published clinical trials on this herbal medicine. Reference is needed for the first sentence under why it is important to do this review.</p> <p>As all randomized trials are prospective, you don't need to crown the RCT by 'prospective'.</p> <p>Please define 'quasi-RCTs'.</p> <p>Please define 'modified GDD'.</p> <p>Please clarify the differences among 'conventional treatment', 'usual care', or 'standard care'.</p> <p>Please define 'treatment efficacy', especially define 'responded to treatment', what does it mean?</p>

REVIEWER	Scholey, Andrew Swinburne University, Centre for Human Psychopharmacology
REVIEW RETURNED	30-Oct-2013

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This paper describes a systematic review protocol to evaluate the efficacy of a herbal medicine Ganmai Dazao Decoction for depression.</p> <p>In general the protocol is described well and easy to follow. The paper falls within the remit of BMJ Open. I have relatively few comments but the manuscript would benefit from a few changes. In particular the authors should consider the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. P. 5 line 42: What is Zangzao syndrome? 2. P. 6 line 4 etc: Do these TCM terms translate into disease/health processes recognised in Western Medicine? If not this should be stated.
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	<p>3. P. 7 methods: the manuscript might benefit from inclusion of a COPNSORT diagram showing the predicted flow of studies at each point (without Ns of course).</p> <p>4. P. 7 methods: This section states that “No language restrictions will be imposed” however elsewhere it seems that only English, Korean and Chinese language manuscripts will be included. Are the authors confident that they will include articles in ANY language?</p> <p>5. P. 7 methods, Type of interventions section: A major criticism of this area is the reproducibility of findings from one study to the next, often because of issues of standardisation of botanical extracts used. What steps will be taken to ensure that the extracts used were adequately standardised or, at the very least, characterised.</p> <p>6. P. 8 lines 37 onwards: could the authors specify the search terms to be used?</p> <p>7. P. 9, Data extraction...: the authors should use the JADAD scale (perhaps the modified version) to assess quality of each paper. [Jadad AR, Moore RA, Carroll D, et al. Assessing the quality of reports of randomized clinical trials: is blinding necessary? Controlled clinical trials. 1996;17(1):1-12. Sarris J, Byrne GJ. A systematic review of insomnia and complementary medicine. Sleep Medicine Reviews. 2011;15(2):99-106.].</p> <p>Minor issues P. 8 line 13 change ‘need’ to ‘needs’</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Responds to reviewer's comments.

Reviewer#1

Comment 1) In the introduction under description of the intervention, please provide more information about the dosage and formulation of the herbal medicine. Please describe if there is any product on market and if so, who authorize the product. Please provide more information about the prevalence of its use and give some references of published clinical trials on this herbal medicine.

Revised> We have now added more information in the introduction (page 5, 2nd paragraph and page 6)

Comment 2) Define ‘quasi-RCT’

Revised> We have defined ‘quasi-RCT’ in page 7, lines 4-6..

Comment 3) Define ‘modified GDD’

Revised > We have clarified ‘modified GDD’ in page 8, line 2-4.

Comment 4) Clarify the difference among ‘conventional treatment’, ‘usual care’ or ‘standard care’

Revised > We have added the differences in page 8, line 6-10.

Comment 4) Define ‘treatment efficacy’, especially define ‘responded to treatment’, what does it mean?

Revised >We have added it in page 8.

Reviewer#2

Comment 1) P.5 line 42: what is Zangzao syndrome?

Revised> We have now delete it.

Comment 2) P.6 line4 etc: Do these TCM terms translate into disease/health processes recognized in Western Medicine? If not this should be stated.

Revised > We have now changed that part (page 6, 2nd paragraph).

Comment 3) P.7 methods: the manuscript might benefit from inclusion of a COPNSORT diagram showing the predicted flow of studies at each point (without Ns of course)

Answer and revised > The reporting guideline for systematic review is PRISMA and we have added the flow diagram in figure 1.

Comment 4) P.7 methods: This section states that “No language restrictions will be imposed” however elsewhere it seems that only English, Korean and Chinese language manuscripts will be included. Are the authors confident that they will include articles in ANY language?

Revised> We have now added this point in page 7.

Comment 5) P.7 methods, Type of intervention section: A major criticism of this area is the reproducibility of findings from one study to the next, often because of issues of standardization of botanical extracts used. What steps will be taken to ensure that the extracts used were adequately standardized or, at the very least, characterized.

Revised > We also agree your point. We will discuss it in the discussion section of full review. We have now added this point in page 13.

Comment 6) P. 8 lines 37 onwards: could the authors specify the search terms to be used?

Revised > We have added the search terms in details (page 9).

Comment 7) P. 9, Data extraction...: the authors should use the JADAD scale (perhaps the modified version) to assess quality of each paper. [Jadad AR, Moore RA, Carroll D, et al. Assessing the quality of reports of randomized clinical trials: is blinding necessary? *Controlled clinical trials*. 1996;17(1):1-12. Sarris J, Byrne GJ. A systematic review of insomnia and complementary medicine. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*. 2011;15(2):99-106.].

Answer> Using JADAD score is old fashioned. There are many controversies for scoring the methodological quality of study. The most recent and recommended one is Cochrane Risk of Bias criteria. We will follow it.

Comment 8) P. 8 line 13 change 'need' to 'needs'

Revised > We have now changed 'need' to 'needs'.

Thank you for your valuable comments.