

# In Reply: Research Trends of Acupuncture Therapy on Knee Osteoarthritis from 2010 to 2019: A Bibliometric Analysis (Letter from Luo et al) [Response To Letter]

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## Dear editor

First of all, we appreciate the Editor-in-Chief for giving us the opportunity to respond to comments from Luo et al. Meanwhile, we also express our gratitude to Luo et al for their attention on our study entitled “Research Trends of Acupuncture Therapy on Knee Osteoarthritis from 2010 to 2019: A Bibliometric Analysis”.<sup>1</sup> Regarding the comments raised by Luo et al, hereby we provide a point-by-point response from the following aspects.

First, prior to the performance of a bibliometric analysis, it is strongly recommended to determine the search terms. To our knowledge, the topic term is a standardized retrieval language, which strictly controls and regulates the synonyms, polysemous words, and different writing forms of the same concept that appear in the studies. Therefore, each topic term has a clear meaning for accurate retrieval. Meanwhile, it also prevents false extraction and omission. Therefore, topic terms search should be selected to achieve high precision and recall rate instead of keywords. Besides, there are a great number of similar bibliometric analysis articles by searching topic terms for publication extraction.<sup>2–4</sup> Thus, the topic terms related to “knee osteoarthritis” and “acupuncture” were selected in our study.

Second, we repeated our initial search method in the WoS database on October 9, 2020. “TS=((Osteoarthritis, Knee) OR (Knee Osteoarthritis) OR (Knees Osteoarthritis) OR (Osteoarthritis, Knees) OR (Osteoarthritis of knee) OR (Osteoarthritis Of Knees) OR (Knee, Osteoarthritis Of) OR (Knees, Osteoarthritis Of)) AND ((Acupuncture Therapy) OR (Acupuncture Treatments) OR (Acupuncture Treatment) OR (Acupuncture) OR (body acupuncture) OR (Needle Acupuncture) OR (Manual Acupuncture) OR (Acupuncture Points) OR (Electroacupuncture) OR (Warm Acupuncture) OR electro-acupuncture)” were inputted. Information about scientific output was extracted from databases in the Web of Science Core Collection, including Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED, 2008–present), Current Chemical Reactions (CCR-EXPANDED, 1985–present), and Index Chemicus (IC, 1993–present). As expected, a total of 346 publications has been acquired. Compared with the 343 publications included

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in our previous study, in which the retrieval data was in March 2020, the additional three articles are new publications included in the WoS database in the past half year. Actually, the heterogeneity in the number of articles retrieved by Luo et al is mainly caused by the differences in the number of database resources purchased by different research institutions and the different retrieval time. Besides, the heterogeneity in retrieval strategies can also give rise to the difference in the number of retrieved literature, but the rationality for our retrieval strategy has been elaborated above. In addition, it was found that the vast majority of included articles for analysis were extracted from the Sci-expanded database by further searching. And the other databases listed by Luo et al are mostly non-medical databases, especially Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI), so inclusion of these databases is unlikely to generate new publications for analysis in a medical research article that aimed to analyze research trends of acupuncture therapy on knee osteoarthritis. Nevertheless, we have tried to cover all these databases in our new search using our proposed retrieval strategy, and as expected, no new eligible publications can be added for bibliometric analysis. Therefore, our results and findings in the published study were robust.

Lastly, the purpose of our research was to explore the current status and trends of the global use of acupuncture on KOA in the last 10 years, which is a very productive period for acupuncture research. Thus, only literature published in this period were included for analysis. Similarly, in some published studies to explore research trends in a specific field, the inclusion of literature in the range of

the past 10 year is not uncommon.<sup>5,6</sup> Nevertheless, in light of advice from Luo et al, we may conduct a bibliometric analysis covering a longer period to investigate a new theme in the future.

In summary, our study provides potential collaborators and institutions, and hot topics, thereby providing a perspective to the developing trend of acupuncture therapy on KOA, which may help researchers explore new directions for future research in this field.

## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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