

Answer to "Inclusion of Chinese databases in meta-analyses on herbal medicine for rhinosinusitis"*

Konstantinos Choulakis³, Alexandros Karatzanis¹, Charalampos Skoulakis², Ioannis M. Vlastos⁴, Emmanuel Prokopakis¹

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¹ Department of Otorhinolaryngology, University of Crete Medical School, Greece

² Department of Otorhinolaryngology Neurology & Sensory Organs, University of Thessaly, Greece

³ Department of Otorhinolaryngology, General Hospital of Athens "G.Gennimatas", Athens, Greece

⁴ Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Evangelismos General Hospital of Athens, Athens, Greece

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We would like to sincerely thank Zhong et al. for their thoughtful and well-articulated letter in response to our recent systematic review ⁽¹⁾. Their commentary offers interesting perspectives on the landscape of traditional herbal medicine research and the role of Chinese-language databases.

However, we must clarify that our study did not exclude Chinese databases per se. As clearly stated in our inclusion criteria, we only excluded studies lacking an English-language abstract—a standard methodological constraint intended to ensure transparent and accurate data extraction and interpretation. This criterion applied equally to all sources, regardless of geographic origin. In fact, Chinese studies were indeed included in our analysis, such as those supporting Xiangju, precisely because they met this condition ⁽²⁾. The claim that the study by Xi et al. was absent from our review is incorrect.

While we recognize the depth of literature within Chinese-language sources, the decision to restrict inclusion to studies with English abstracts was deliberate. The epistemological and linguistic barriers in fully evaluating articles grounded in Traditional Chinese Medicine—often based on paradigms fundamentally different from Western medicine—render simple translation insufficient and introduce a risk of misinterpretation that would compromise the review's scientific integrity.

If, as your letter suggests, you possess the requisite linguistic and clinical expertise to accurately analyze this body of literature, we strongly encourage you to undertake a systematic review incorporating Chinese-language sources. Such work would complement our findings and contribute meaningfully to the global evidence base—ideally with the same methodological rigor expected in international scholarship.

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Konstantinos Choulakis, MD, MSc
General Hospital of Athens
"G. Gennimatas"
Athens
Greece

Tel: +306945069026

E-mail: choulakis.k@gmail.com