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journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ctimEffect of *Zataria multiflora* on fatty liver disease

We appreciate the important comment on the methodology of our clinical trial on the effect of *Zataria multiflora* in patients with fatty liver disease.¹ There are specific considerations regarding design of an appropriate placebo for clinical trials on herbal medicines and traditional formulations.^{2,3} The formulation of a placebo with similarity in color, texture, odor and taste with the active herbal drug is challenging. It is also difficult to label an ingredient as completely inert from the perspective of traditional medicine. Traditional medicine considers specific healing effects for specific odors or tastes; so the application of ingredients with similar taste or odor of main drug may distort the placebo inertness.

Different methods are evolved to minimize the limitations of the placebo design in clinical trials on traditional formulations. Application of vehicle of the main formulation as placebo is one of these methods which are popularly used in trials on traditional topical formulations.^{4,5} Another method is adding a low dose of main active drug which is clinically ineffective in placebo formulations.⁶ This method cause more similarity between placebo and interventional herbal drugs regarding their odor, color and taste and help in maintaining the blindness in clinical trials.

In conclusion, according to the limitations mentioned in our article like short duration of the study,¹ we think that presence of a minimal amount of *Zataria multiflora* Boiss. (Shirazi thyme) in placebo capsule was beneficial in blinding of the trial with negligible effects on study outcomes.

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