


# Bibliometric Analysis of Research Trends on Acupuncture for Neck Pain Treatment Over the Past 20 Years – Response to Zhang and Zhang [Response To Letter]

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## Dear editor

We read the letter to the editor from Zhang and Zhang<sup>1</sup> regarding our published article<sup>2</sup> with great interest. Despite feeling sorry for readers about confusing them with unclear expressions in the manuscript, we also simultaneously felt great joy because the reading and comments of other researchers on our paper gave us a chance to provide feedback from our study. We feel thankful to the editor for providing us with an opportunity to respond. Zhang and Zhang pointed out two questions and we divided them into three queries for the reader's comfort. Herein are our answers.

First, the authors of the letter suggested more keywords for searching than those in our original work. On November 22, 2021, there came out 656 articles by the original search method in the Web of Science Core Collection with Topic. When we tried searching with the suggested keywords “(acupuncture OR electroacupuncture) AND (cervical pain OR neck pain OR neck ache OR cervicgia OR cervicodynia),” it yielded 657 articles on the same date (We did not include “pharmacopuncture” because we originally excluded the keyword as originally written in the method section of our manuscript). All the articles corresponded between two methods, but one article<sup>3</sup> was additionally searched. After screening, it was found that the article was not written in English, and should be excluded from our study according to our methodology.

Second, regarding using double quotation marks, when we tried it in our original searching method as “(‘acupuncture’ OR ‘electroacupuncture’) AND (‘cervical pain’ OR ‘neck pain’),” the result showed 382 articles, which was not narrower than the 658 studies that we had at first. In addition, the 382 articles did not include many articles that were finally included in the analysis. Therefore, we carefully insist that without double quotation marks, it will bring more results, raising the quality of the analysis. In addition, researchers are supposed to go through the procedure of screening with the title and abstract; therefore, the more the articles in the initial result after searching, the better and broader the outcome of the study.

Third, out of 325 articles that were finally included in the analysis, 287 articles were included in the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), 37 in the Emerging

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Sources Citation Index (ESCI), and one in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI). ESCI refers to emerging scientific journals without an impact factor. Broadening the search databases to this kind of field, and not only focusing on SCIE, will increase the number of articles included in the analysis, resulting in better and more accurate outcomes of the study. Additionally, from this work, we found an ESCI journal that is ranked the 12th top journal in terms of number of publications under the theme “acupuncture for neck pain,” which is “Journal of Acupuncture and Tuina Science.”

Diversifying the search term, using double quotation marks, and limiting the selection of databases in the bibliometric analysis depends on the researcher's decision. However, bibliometric analysis usually requires the procedure of reading the abstract or content and selecting articles; therefore, a method to extract as many articles as possible in the initial search result will be more useful for better results.

Due to the eagerness of the researchers Zhang and Zhang, we could provide feedback on our study and check the diverse bibliometric methods available. Similar to the checklist of other types of research such as The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement<sup>4</sup> and The Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) statement,<sup>5</sup> a checklist for bibliometric analysis could be

suggested by groups of specialists in this field to make worldwide standards.

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## Disclosure

The authors declare no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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