

Previous reviewer comments:

**Journal Name: Clinical Epidemiology**

**Title: Zinc Lozenges May Shorten the Duration of Colds: a Systematic Review**

**ID: 15728**

**Author: Dr Hemila**

The manuscript was rejected on the basis of the following three reviewer comments. However, I was encouraged to submit the manuscript to Clinical Pharmacology after taking into account the reviewer comments.

Replies to the reviewer comments by Harri Hemilä 24 Nov, 2010

The *reviewer comments* are in italics

Harri Hemilä's comments are followed after the bold **HH:**

## **REVIEWER 2 EVALUATION**

*This systematic review with a meta-analysis examines whether dosage of zinc lozenges impacts the duration cold symptoms. The introduction is succinct and provides adequate background and justification for the review. The search strategy employed appears to be relevant and comprehensive.*

*It is unclear whether the primary author is the sole reviewer of the studies to be included in the analysis or whether a second reviewer was involved (as per 3rd paragraph in the methods section).*

**HH:** The colleague mentioned helped me in checking that the extracted data was accurate. Nevertheless, I am the only author and I take full personal responsibility of the accuracy.

*The "statistical methods" section is too long. Some of the narrative detail covering justification for methods may be better placed in the discussion or left out all together.*

**HH:** Description of the reasoning for the statistical methods is needed. In my opinion this is a methods issue and sits better in the Method section, in contrast to the Discussion section. If the two methods would lead to different conclusions, then they should be discussed briefly in the Discussion.

*The discussion is quite lengthy. The section on "previous reviews ", for example, could be reduced substantially. A statement or section dedicated to explicitly stating strengths and limitations of this review should be included in the discussion.*

**HH:** The sub-sections in the Discussion are short and largely refer to previously published papers. E.g., I give many references to more detailed discussions about the possible role of lozenge

compositions (I cannot discuss that issue in more detail in this manuscript). The text about safety is very short already, etc. Thus, I do not agree that the Discussion could be substantially shortened.

Discussion of the two previous influential reviews is essential. If my conclusions are different from two influential earlier important reviews, the divergence needs an explanation.

*The second sentence in the "conclusion" section of the abstract does not appear to fit. The addition of a statement of what this study adds to the state of knowledge in this area would add substantially to the abstract.*

**HH:** Rewritten