Reviewer's report

Title: Alternative analyses for handling incomplete follow-up in the intention-to-treat analysis: the randomized controlled trial of balloon kyphoplasty versus non-surgical care for vertebral compression fracture (FREE)

Version: 5 Date: 22 December 2011

Reviewer: Amir Herman

Reviewer's report:

I was happy to receive the revised manuscript by the authors.
I think it is an important paper with contribution to the field of interest.

However, several important revisions should be made:
1. Table 2 - Coefficient of variance - do you mean estimated effect? I would recommend changing.
2. How did you calculated MSE? more specifically - what did you use as the estimated expectation? the mean from the CC analysis? I would suggest using the mean effect from all the four methods used and presenting the MSE for all the four methods.
3. Figures 4 and 5 are titled as reduction of SE and negative values are given. Shouldn't they be titled - Relative Change in SE ? where negative change mean reduction?
4. I would expect for figures of the SE and MSE and relative change in SE specific numerical examples in the text of the results. For better understanding of the figures.
5. I believe that the MSE Figure is the most important - It should include all the four methods as explained above and specific conclusions should be drawn from it.
6. How was mean reduction calculated in Figure 3?
7. Reference 18 is missing
8. Isn't figure 5 unnecessary and can be omitted?
9. It seems that CC overestimates the effect of the treatment - It should be part of the MSE conclusions.
10. what can you infer (or speculate) about the fact the control group have more missing values than the treatment group? is MAR appropriated ? It is in agreement with findings of Herman et al (Intention to treat and missing values ...)

I do believe that this manuscript is worthy of publication after revision.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests.