Reviewer's report

**Title:** A Descriptive Study of Older Adults with Persistent Pain: Use and Perceived Effectiveness of Pain Management Strategies [ISRCTN-CCT-NAPN-11230]

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 12 August 2005

**Reviewer:** Cary Reid

**Reviewer's report:**

General. This largely descriptive study reports on the types of strategies used by a sample of older persons with chronic pain, their perceived effectiveness and explores associations between these factors and selected participant characteristics. The paper is well written, informative, and adds to the very limited literature in this area. One limitation of this work is the potential for selection bias in that subjects were recruited for a clinical trial examining a psychological therapy. The authors acknowledge this limitation in the Discussion section.

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**Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)**

Page 11. I was not able to retrieve the Appendix, but I think it is important to let readers know how many of the reported strategies came from the other category. Providing evidence that your closed-ended questions captured the vast majority of responses (as opposed to the other category) is important. On a related note, what method(s) was used to categorize the responses you got from the 'other category? Were these responses folded into to Table 3?

Page 12 and Table 1. You do not include univariate statistics for two of your primary psychological variables (depression, self-efficacy). Please add information to the text (or Table 1) so that readers can discern the mean scores and distributions for these two variables.

Page 13. You identified bivariate associations between depressive symptoms and treatment helpfulness and for self efficacy score and treatment helpfulness. Given that both depressive symptoms and self-efficacy are likely related to one another (and both psychological factors may also be related to pain intensity) why were multivariable analyses not performed?

Page 17. Your findings do NOT point to the need for further research to develop SAFE medications (given that you did not assess risks associated with analgesic medication use. I would simply delete the word 'safe' from the sentence. As a group the medications did not appear to be more effective than the other strategies listed in Table 3. Your results suggest the need for the development of more effective drug AND non-drug therapies.

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**Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)**

page 2. Please include age ranges for young-old and mid-old and old-old in the
abstract

page 11. It is not clear why you selected reporting strategies for 25 or more participants only. Please provide a rationale in the methods section

Table 3. I was not able to locate an Appendix to review. I would be interested in how you worded the question regarding exercise. It would be important to know that participants were asked whether they used exercise specifically as a means of managing their pain (as opposed to using exercise for various other health benefits). Presumably the Appendix makes this clear.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

None.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests