Reviewer's report

Title: Effects of resistance and functional-skills training on habitual activity and constipation among older adults living in long-term care facilities: a randomized controlled trial [ISRCTN87177281]

Version: 2 Date: 16 February 2006

Reviewer: John Schnelle

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions
This paper makes several very important points that have not been clearly made by other published literature. Most notably, two exercise interventions did not produce significant effects on physical activity outside of the exercise sessions or on constipation. Despite the limitations that are sited by the authors (e.g., unusual NH population in terms of constipation prevalence) these are important points that need to be made. I have two suggestions for the discussion section.

1. It should be made clear that the exercise interventions evaluated did not effect activity or constipation but that their intensity may not have been adequate to do so. One exercise intervention for this frail population that may be more successful in increasing overall physical activity involves distributing exercise throughout the day as was described in the Simmons et al article sited by the authors. The population reported in this Simmons article were more frail than those described in the this paper but providing exercise every two hours for 10-20 minutes three times per day did result in overall physical activity increases. However, even this intervention did not effect constipation despite significantly increasing activity.

2. Constipation is a multi faceted problem that is thought to be related to physical activity, food fluid intake and medication usage. To improve constipation, it may be necessary to implement an intervention that affects all of these risk factors.

What next?: Accept after discretionary 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.