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 [ISRCTN871777281]

Version: 2 Date: 10 March 2006

Reviewer: Nico Van Meeteren

Reviewer's report:

General
It goes without saying that the issues raised by Paw et al are of importance. The paper is clear on the design etceteras, and well written, in fact pleasant to read. The authors are to be complimented for that.

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

What's highly interesting to know for the readers is the following (and I hope the authors can add these to the paper):
- A plausible physiological rationale concerning the relationship between physical training and constipation and insight on expected sizes of effectiveness (in which power-analyses on data of a pilot study might be helpful);
- Exploration of data of an extended baseline period with frequent sampling in order to see the dynamics and individual differences in the scores of the main outcome measures;
- Insight in the data of an intermediate outcome concerning the progression of the exact loads during both the functional as well as the resistant training;
- Add data from other intermediate variables, for instance concerning possible changes during the trial in food- and water intake and/or in daily activities;
- Based on these results, I do serious have doubts on the power analysis. More explicit and detailed insight on the data used here and the maths used is warranted.

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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)

It is of interest to the reader to have knowledge on the sensitivity to change of the instruments used on the main outcome parameters in this population;
Recent publications of the Vreede et al (which is a colleague of our research-group), might also be considered to take notice of.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
As a service to the readers a figure on the outcomes might help to visualize the outcome.

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What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests