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: 4 Date: 2 June 2006

Reviewer: Nico Van Meeteren

Reviewer's report:

General

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

The authors have changed the manuscript based on former input and this should normally be enough. Still, the phrase in the discussion concerning the monitoring of the exercise intensity (page 13-14) raises a serious problem with the professional ethical standards of physical therapists when the paper is published. That is, the ethical standard of the Royal Dutch Society of Physiotherapy - in parallel with those of World Confederation of Physiotherapy-standards - demand proper registration and monitoring of therapy-input and its outcome. Based on the aforementioned phrase in the discussion, it seems that the 'real life' situation of this project was/is not in accordance with these ethical standards. In order to avoid discussion about this problem, I would like to advice the authors to change the phrase and come up with another rationale for not monitoring the exercise intensity and intermediate outcome. This should also be added in the discussion-phrase the autors added at page 14, lines 6-13. Might be that the autors could in this respect refer to amongst others a recent paper of Glasziou (P. Glasziou, L. Irwig, and D. Mant. Monitoring in chronic disease: a rational approach. Lancet 330:644-648, 2005).

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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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 of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No