Reviewer’s report

Title: A snapshot of the prevalence of physical activity amongst older, community dwelling Victorians: patterns across the young-old and old-old

Version: 1 Date: 11 November 2006

Reviewer: Miles Witham

Reviewer’s report:

General

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

1) p5 para 1: Please cite examples and references for physical activity reducing need for medication in older people

2) At the end of the introduction, a clear statement of why the study was conducted is needed. At present, the authors explain what they report, not why the study was done.

3) p6 para 1. Where was the study carried out? Country, state, area?

4) p6 para 1: Were the exclusion criteria applied to patients in the current study or just to patients in the intervention study? If the former, this severely limits the generalisability of the data - it applies only to those who were less likely to be active but were suitable for doing exercise. If this is the case, it is difficult to see how any useful results can be derived.

5) p7 para 1: Which University Ethics committee? Did the study accord with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki?

6) p7 para 5: the AAS has good criterion validity.... In which group of patients?

7) p8 para 3: How many questionnaires were sent out? What was the response rate?

8) p 9 para 1: When giving p values, it needs to be clear what is being compared with what - this is not clear for older age groups or for gender / heavy work. Give the values and CIs for all comparisons. Same for p 10 para 2.

9) p10 para 1: I think that it is important to show the data re: lack of association between knowledge and physical activity. This is critically important and suggests that education (easy as it might be) is not going to be the answer in increasing physical activity amongst older people.

Discussion: The discussion is long and poorly focussed. Less time should be spent describing the results of other studies - key results should be used to compare with the current work. Some comment needs to be made as to the potential weaknesses of the sample and of self-report of activity intensity and duration. Some discussion of the potential barriers to activity in older people would be useful, along with some comment as to how applicable the authors think the intensity and duration guidelines are for frail older people.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

1) p5 para 2: Replace one of the examples of 'sedentary' with an alternative term

2) p7 para 2: Undergo, not undertake.
3) p8 para 2: Please give the cutoffs for the categories of age used.

4) p8 para 3: Be consistent about words / numbers (23 / twenty three)

5) p9 para 1: Keep to 1 decimal place for figures

6) p11 para 3: Omit brackets - 'with a response rate of' rather than (response rate was)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

p12 para 2: Comorbid disease does limit the ability of older people to participate in activity. The point is that the activity needs to be tailored to the needs and capabilities of older people with comorbid disease.

p13 para 1: Expansion of your thoughts re: the stages of change model would be interesting here.

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: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests