Reviewer's report

Title: Enhanced sensitivity to punctate painful stimuli in female patients with chronic low back pain

Version: 1 Date: 6 August 2012

Reviewer: Herta Flor

Reviewer's report:

This study used pinprick stimuli to determine if there is higher sensitivity to noxious stimulation in chronic low back pain patients than matched controls. The authors report enhanced sensitivity to both low and moderate pinprick stimuli at the back and a remote site (the hand) suggesting alterations in higher level processing or an enhanced vulnerability.

The introduction covers the most important materials but disregards the older literature on perceptual deficits in CLBP, which is quite extensive and also covers the topic of habituation.

Throughout the paper a number of grammatical errors can be found that need to be corrected in a revised version (for example, replace subjects’ characteristics by subject characteristics or 6 months history by six month history; each stimuli should be each stimulus; stimulation side should be stimulation site.) Although the subjects were without medication at the time of the testing it would be good to know what medication they were using. With the small N of subjects this could be given per subject and medication aftereffects could be tested. The time the patients were off medication was very short. How was compliance tested?

The methods and results are otherwise adequately described but the authors should give exact p-values for non-significant comparisons.

The discussion is adequate.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.