Reviewer’s report

Title: The efficacy of physiotherapy upon shoulder function following axillary dissection in breast cancer, a pilot study.

Version: 2 Date: 14 April 2007

Reviewer: Peer Christiansen

Reviewer’s report:

General

This well-written manuscript concerns the role of physiotherapy following axillary lymph node dissection (ALND) in relation to breast cancer surgery. This is an important subject on which the scientific literature is scarce. The present randomized study adds to the growing evidence for recommending physiotherapy following breast cancer surgery. The follow-up period is rather short (6 months) and this is a limitation of the study. Furthermore, it seems strange, that one recently published study from my institution is not included in the references, as it is a randomized controlled study with more patients and longer observation time.

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

Before publication, the above mentioned Danish study (Lauridsen et al. Acta Oncologica 2005; 44: 449-57) should be referred to and properly addressed in Background and Discussion.

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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)

In the description of the study design it could be helpful if it more clearly was stated that the assessments were done by one single researcher (if so) and made at the Department of Physiotherapy, which did not participate in the actual treatment of the patients.

When measuring arm volume a method of water displacement was used. Instead of giving total volume, or as a supplement to this, the difference in volume between the affected- and non-affected arm could be reported, as this might decrease the variation caused by doing measurements over a rather large time span.

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 importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.