Reviewer's report

**Title:** Prevalence of low back pain in children and adolescents: a meta-analysis

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 7 November 2012

**Reviewer:** Mark Hancock

**Reviewer's report:**

This paper is answers an important question, the study has been performed well and the manuscript is quite easy to follow. I have only a few suggestions for improvement

**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. The conclusion in the abstract and at the end of the paper says “children have lower lifetime prevalence rates than adolescents”. I don’t think this is a good summary of the paper or the results presented. This sounds like a direct comparison between children and adolescents was both an aim of the study and performed as an analysis. This should be changed.

2. As a related point make it clear in the introduction that the aim was to investigate children and adolescents together not separately

3. Consider referring to 1 week rather than 0.25 months in abstract and throughout

4. Page 5 line 3: change lesser to less

5. Page 6. Justify decision to limit studies to after 1980

6. Page 7: Much of what is presented in the first half of the page should be in the results not the methods

7. Provide more detail of the search process especially how many people were involved in screening for inclusion and how this was performed

8. Page 13: the sentence ending in “validated or at least tested for reproducibility does not read well. This seems like it needs to be 2 separate sentences.

9. The authors included cross sectional and longitudinal studies but it seems only reported on cross sectional data. Would prospective longitudinal studies provide better estimates for period prevalence? Did some studies report this?

10. Page 18: the term delimitation of pain is used for the first time. Why is this not defined in the methods, I found this confusing.

11. The authors interestingly found higher prevalence rates in more recent studies. Can they speculate about if this is a real change, a reporting issue or other?

12. I think the section on implications for practice is a weakness of the paper. I suggest re-writing this.
13. Re-word the first sentence in implications for future research to: Our results enable us to make recommendations for …

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests