Reviewer’s report

Title: Effectiveness of physical therapy interventions for children with cerebral palsy: a systematic review

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Reviewer: Adri Vermeer

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I have a quite ambivalent opinion about this manuscript. At one hand, it fulfills quite well the criteria for a scientific publication, at the other hand, the methodology chosen for the evaluation, i.e. only randomized controlled trials (RCTs), restricts the implication of the results of this evaluation.

On page 3 of the manuscript, a broad scope of objectives of physical therapy (PT) are described. Considering the relatively young scientific development of PT, it is clear that research to establish the outcomes of PT does not yet demonstrate the effectiveness of PT on the highest levels on evidence. Restricting yourself to an evaluation method that only consists of a classification within the highest level of evidence, namely RCTs, means that a lot of valuable scientific PT research is not honoured. There are several methods to evaluate (para-)medical interventions which render justice to both the scientific level of PT research and the broad scope of PT, e.g. the Oxford Center of Evidence-Based Medicine Levels of Evidence (2001) and the Rules of Evidence of Sacket (1986).

The last ten years highly valuable PT intervention research has been carried out on all levels of evidence. This research is not mentioned in this manuscript, or it has got a low ranking because of the use of a very restricted method of evaluation. The implication of the choice for the specific method to evaluate the levels of evidence of PT intervention research is that the conclusions of the evaluation are very restricted. During the last 20 years, there are quite a number of reviews of PT intervention research published in scholarly journals, which provide a valid scientific picture of this research taking into account a variety of levels of evidence.

Unfortunately, I have to advise not to accept this manuscript for publication.