Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 7 February 2008

**Reviewer:** Diane Damiano

**Reviewer's report:**

**General comments:**

1. The authors reviewed randomized clinical trials (RCT) in physical therapy in children and adolescents with a diagnosis of cerebral palsy (CP) from 1990 on, as included in four databases (in languages which the authors had proficiency in) and an extended search from the reference list in the articles that were identified. The search strategy was provided in detail. At least two authors were involved in independent selection of the final list of articles to be reviewed, judging the quality of the trials and extracting data from each with any non-agreement resolved by a third author. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were well specified. In addition, the types of interventions were grouped into categories as determined by the authors. This provides a very useful overview of the amount, level and type of evidence on this topic and on the extent to which common outcomes are used to evaluate different interventions within this population. Of particular value was the categorizing of the outcomes by ICF categories.

2. (minor essential rev) One weakness is the fact that the judgment of the amount of evidence mentioned throughout the results was not described until the discussion and should have been noted up front.

**Specific comments:** (all minor essential to at least address)

3. p. 6, P.2 Why 1990? Why not EMBASE or other databases? Please provide brief justification

4. p. 8, P 3 do not agree that the NDT category just addressed the upper arm Obviously you were trying to distinguish it from constraint, but perhaps you should label it as more traditional upper extremity rehabilitation approaches to be more fair.

5. p. 10, l. 1 do you mean handgrip force? Is so, please add that.

6. p.10 before the second paragraph, describe how you are rating the level of evidence

7. p.11, P.2, l. 3 Please define what â##better in gait analysisâ## meant

8. p. 14 Discussion, sentence 1 - why not?

9. p. 14, l. 8 Could you describe more clearly about the language issues of the 3 trials that were omitted. You may want to state how many trials not published in
English were included.

10. p. 16, P 2, l. 3 Would recommend âaddressedâ rather than successfully resolved because dealing with heterogeneity is not that simple.

11. p. 17, l. 6 better read have not âbeen shown to be sensitive in detectingâ

12. p. 18, P 3, l. 3 How similar did studies need to be to be considered the same, e.g. how different can NDT in the upper extremity or strengthening in the lower extremity be. (this should be stately more clearly âbecause types of interventions were grouped here."

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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