Reviewer’s report

Title: Back and neck pain are related to mental health problems in adolescence

Version: 1 Date: 30 December 2010

Reviewer: Lars Lien

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The article is of limited interest since there have been published hundreds of papers on the cross-sectional relation between pain and mental health problems and I just cannot see that this article really adds any new dimensions other than to utilize the CBCL questionnaire.

2. In the aim it states that neck pain and mental health has been neglected in the literature. This is wrong (just from Norway; see literature by Lien, Bruusgaard and Haugland) and it is also wrong to isolate neck pain as most pain is widespread (see: Natvig B, Ihlebæk C, Grotle M, Brage S, Bruusgaard D. Neck pain is often a part of widespread pain and is associated with reduced functioning. Spine. 2010 Nov 1;35(23)).

3. In the methods section there are no information about procedures for sampling and on how many non participants there were and their characteristics. There is no sex or age distribution presented. The word follow up is mentioned, but no statement that this is a cross-sectional study.

4. One of the really major problems is the lack of possible confounding factors like socio-demographic and family economy. It is also a problem that the authors do not discuss the direction of causation especially in a possible prospective study.

5. It is also wrong spell out in the discussion that there are interesting gender differences. This has been found in several other studies. The same applies to internalizing and externalizing symptoms. There is a lot of boasting in the article using words like first large-scale, first to report etc. Some humbleness would have benefited the article.

Minor Essential Revisions

Discretionary Revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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'