Reviewer's report

Title: Pragmatic randomised controlled trial of preferred intensity exercise in women living with depression

Version: 1 Date: 8 January 2011

Reviewer: Fernando Dimeo

Reviewer's report:

The trial is interesting, however I see several issues that the authors have to address before I can recommend the publication.

Major comments:

1. The trial should evaluate patients with depression. However, the broad standard deviation suggest that at least some participants did not suffer from depression. A BDI of less than 12 does not show "light depression", but normal mood.

2. It is not clear if both groups are indeed exercising at different intensities. When I compare heart rate and RPI I do not see a substantial difference between both groups. Therefore, it seems to me that both groups exercised very similary. However, the control group did not improve at all. The authors should provide a rationale for this difference between both groups.

3. The sample calculation predicted a n=58. However, only 38 participants were recruited. The authors should explain this point.

Minor comments:

4. Please change the abstract to include means and standard deviation of the scores.

5. Please provide the criteria for exercise in the intervention group (how high was the RPE?) and also the criteria for the control group (duration, intensity, heart rate).

6. The "Discussion" seems to lack a source (XX).

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'