Reviewer’s report

Title: Exercise training for asbestos-related and other dust-related respiratory diseases: a randomised controlled trial

Version: 2 Date: 23 August 2014

Reviewer: Anne Holland

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript which details a randomised controlled trial of exercise training in people with dust-related respiratory diseases.

This is a group that in theory should benefit from rehabilitation but have not been sufficiently studied to date. This study would make a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge. It is small but the design and findings are robust.

Discretionary revisions

There are a number of areas in the manuscript which would benefit from clarification.

1. The sample size states that 26 participants would be required but 35 were randomised. Why?

2. Some elements of the methodology would benefit from further justification or clarification. Why were people on long term oxygen therapy excluded? Were all three exercise sessions supervised each week? Why was strength training not included, given it is considered a standard component of pulmonary rehabilitation? Why was the exercise group not provided with advice regarding ongoing exercise?

3. The statistical analysis section states that data were analysed by intention to treat, however this does not tell the reader anything about how missing data were dealt with.

4. It would be useful if the limitations section of the discussion gave a clearer picture of to whom these results can be applied. For instance, the exclusion of people on LTOT and the relatively well preserved functional capacity in this group at baseline indicate that these findings apply to those with relatively mild disease.

5. Results for 6MWT at week 8 are shown in figure 1, Table 2 and Table 3. At least one of these should be deleted.

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 have no competing interests.