Reviewer's report

Title: Does Physical Activity Change Predict Functional Recovery in Low Back Pain? Protocol for a Prospective Cohort Study

Version: 1 Date: 28 July 2009

Reviewer: Kate Dunn

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Major Compulsory Revision
Your sample size may be big enough for the main outcome - to detect a clinically meaningful change in RMDQ - but it is probably not big enough to support your planned adjusted analyses, nor your planned subgroup analysis of occupational type.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Why did you choose change in physical activity as your primary predictor? Surely absolute physical activity levels are important too? Concurrent change in physical activity and back pain disability may just be a pattern of recovery, rather than physical activity predicting recovery.
2. There is some confusion in your use of language around confounders, effect modifiers and moderators. These are not the same thing. It appears that you are planning to adjust for a number of confounders, but also investigate potential effect modification of occupational type. The whole manuscript should reflect this clearly.
4. In your analysis section the Nordic Questionnaire is suddenly introduced. This is not included in the methods. Please clarify.

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