Reviewer's report

Title: Research priorities for non-pharmacological therapies for common musculoskeletal problems: nationally and internationally agreed recommendations

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Reviewer: Gert Bronfort

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It is not clear from the title and manuscript what the consensus process represents in terms of the professional background and experience in clinical trial research in the area of musculoskeletal disorders. From the title, the reader is left with the impression that the group behind this article and consensus process have broad representation among recognized international clinical trialists. As far as I can tell almost the entire participant group consists of physical therapists who as one of several professions have clearly made important contribution to the clinical research in this field. However, the input from other internationally recognized contributors to the clinical trial literature representing professions such as osteopaths, medical doctors, chiropractors and others seem to be underrepresented and that two of three who represent such professions who participated in the core group process are not part of the authorship team.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Although this is not stated explicitly, this paper represents mainly a mono-professional consensus opinion, and therefore has limited generalizability. This major limitation cannot likely be remedied at this point but a contemplated resubmission of this paper needs to address this limitation.

2. I also find it a weakness that a group of 133 conference participants, of whom only a little over half stated that they were researchers was the group chosen to further refine the priorities of the recommendations. That means that a substantial number of people with little or no research background and experience played an important role in the final consensus process.

3 Seven recommendations emerged, and most of them are valuable when designing future clinical trials, and to funding agencies, but they also are not very innovative and most of them are factors that are already taken into account when designing and conducting and publishing trial in recent years. In my opinion, what is missing from this list are topics such as research which addresses underlying mechanisms of action of different commonly used treatments with known effect. But more importantly, research that focuses on understanding the underlying multifactorial etiologies of the conditions that are managed with non-pharmacological and other treatments.

In summary, this paper would greatly benefit by a rewriting of the discussion and
especially the limitation section to address the issues raised above.

**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