Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence, Characteristics, and Outcomes of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders: A Survey Among Physical Therapists in the State of Kuwait.

Version: 2 Date: 1 March 2010

Reviewer: Babatunde Adegoke

Reviewer's report:

Discretionary Revisions

1. Title: The title of the article does not capture its whole essence since the work also included non-work related musculoskeletal disorders. The title should be revised to include non-work related disorders. The title may read thus “Prevalence, characteristics and outcome of work and non-work related musculoskeletal disorders: a survey of physical therapists in the State of Kuwait”.

2. Abstract: Pg2 line 2- Change ‘risk for’ to ‘risk of’

3. Background: Pg 3 line 29- Change ‘health care professionals’ to ‘and other health care professionals’. Or are physical therapists not health care professionals?

4. Pg 3 line 38: Recast the sentence to read ‘These findings contradict the findings from other studies –’

5. Pg 4 line 54 & pg 5 line 67: Replace ‘questionnaires’ with ‘questionnaire’.

6. Participants’ description

7. Pg 5 line 83: Change ‘fewer’ to ‘lesser’.

8. Prevalence rate of WMSDs


10. Pg 6 line 112: Replace ‘frequencies’ with ‘prevalence’ in line with the title of the work.

11. Pg 7 lines 114 & 115: Insert the symbol for Chi square test

12. Demographics, work settings, and exercise habits

13. Pg 9 line 172: Replace ‘women and men’ with ‘female and male’ respectively.

14. Pg 10 lines 182, 192, 193, & 199: Replace ‘frequency’ with ‘prevalence’

15. Pg 11 line 205: Format the title to read ‘WMSDs’ impact on work’

Minor essential revisions

16. Reconcile the use of the terms ‘incidence’ and ‘prevalence’ in several areas of the manuscript e.g. Pg 2 line 3, pg 8 line 146, & pg 10 line 193. The two terms are not synonyms and should not be used as such.

17. Correct the misuse of the word ‘correlation’ instead of ‘association’. See pg 6
Major compulsory revisions

Abstract
18. The study’s conclusion should be based on the study’s findings only. The authors should hence delete the following statement from the conclusion: ‘The factors associated with these disorders remain unknown’.

19. What sample size was used to calculate the reported prevalence rates? Was it the 222 reported in the abstract or the 212 reported under results? The authors should not report just percentages but accompany them with the absolute figures to enable readers ascertain the correctness or otherwise of the reported percentages.

Background
20. The background appears inconclusive as it failed to present a research problem and hence justify the need for the study.

21. To justify the inclusion of non-work related musculoskeletal disorders under results, the background section should include at least a paragraph on non-work related musculoskeletal disorders.

Participants
22. The authors should explain how they obtained their random sample in spite of their inclusion criteria.

23. Was it the study’s protocol or the informed consent form that was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Kuwait University? Please clarify.

Procedures
24. Was the questionnaire administered to all 350 physical therapists that met the study’s inclusion criteria? Please reconcile this with the random sample mentioned under participants. How many physical therapists are in Kuwait?

Results
25. Why was the questionnaire administered on 10 participants who did not meet an inclusion criterion for the study i.e. one year job experience? Please defend this lapse as it calls to question the diligence with which data collection was pursued.

26. The result presentation was unduly long as authors chose to repeat virtually all information on their tables thereby defeating the purpose of tables. Please present highlights of your findings in the text and refer readers to appropriate tables for further details.

27. When presenting prevalence rates, the authors should delete ‘n and =’ before the figures and put the percentages in parentheses thus: 40(19%) instead of (n-40, 19%).

Discussion
28. The first paragraph of the discussion looks like the study’s conclusion. It should hence be moved to replace the current conclusion which looks like recommendation.

Demographics work settings and exercise habits
29. The authors may consider higher work load as a plausible reason for the higher prevalence of lower back complaints in younger physical therapists.
30. Superior clinical judgement appears to be more relevant to choice of interventions and hence eventual outcome rather than prevalence of back pain in physical therapists.

WMSDs’ impact on work
31. The authors should delete Table 5 from line 2 of this section as it is not customary to refer to tables under discussion.
32. Please justify your inference that ‘work duties were not affected by musculoskeletal disorders’ considering that you reported that 25% of the participants had sick leave because of WMSDs.

Conclusion
33. This needs to be rewritten to capture the real findings from the study. The authors may create another section to accommodate their recommendation for further research.

Tables
34. The titles of tables 2 & 3 should be rephrased to reflect that they are reporting tests of association.
35. Also for tables 3 & 4, Fishers exact test should be performed when the expected counts in a cell are less than 5.

Other comments
36. Please highlight the limitations of the study. For instance, the ease of differentiating between work and non-work related musculoskeletal disorders and recall problem.
37. Discuss the implications of your findings for clinical practice.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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 interest.