Reviewer’s report

Title: Cognitive, fear-reducing information or individual symptom-based physical training in chronic LBP. A pragmatic, randomized, controlled trial with 1-year follow-up.

Version: 4 Date: 13 May 2010

Reviewer: Steven George

Reviewer’s report:

This revised paper from Sorensen et al is an improvement from the original submission. The authors have made substantial changes to the manuscript, and when changes were not made the authors provided their rationale. The paper is clearly improved, but I do have some remaining suggestions before this manuscript goes to press. At this point I would encourage the authors to consult with their professional writer because there are numerous and noticeable typos as well as errors in syntax, grammar, etc.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. None – all previous points have been addressed.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. The Introduction could more clearly delineate between the “injury” and “non-injury” models – the explanations are blended in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the introduction.
2. The link of the injury model to terms like “fear-avoidance and kinesiophobia to malingers” is confusing to this reviewer. Please clarify and provide appropriate references, or make it very clear this is your opinion.
3. Remove the genetics and disc degeneration information – these factors are interesting but continue to have a limited role in the current study. This is distracting information for the primary purpose of the trial.
4. Typically power analyses are done with the same outcome reported in the study. The authors should indicate why the study was initially powered on return to work rates, but ended up reporting pain and activity limitations as the primary outcomes. This is important information for a study with many null comparisons.
5. Use of MRI and discussion of findings for all patients seems contrary to the intent of a “non-injury” model, and this application could have potentially decreased its effects. The authors should consider alerting readers to this potential issue in the Discussion.
6. Is this really the first study on this topic? It seems that the Linton et al, 2005 study had a similar design, CB, CB+PT, and a usual care group.
7. The first paragraph of the Discussion contains results from post-hoc and exploratory analyses – these really should be presented in the Results section.
8. At the risk of being self-serving, our group has reported RCT’s involving the combination of physical treatment with fear-reduction cognitive interventions (George et al, Spine 2003 and George et al, Pain 2008) and these references may be added to the Discussion of other studies on page 14.

9. The authors were resistant to adding limitations, but I still think consideration of a few limitations is warranted – not all readers of this manuscript will be researchers who are knowledgeable of the limitations.

**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 interests'