Reviewer's report

Title: Low back pain in junior Australian Rules football: a cross-sectional survey of elite juniors, juniors and non-football controls

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Reviewer: Philip Glasgow

Reviewer's report:

Overall Review

This is a well written and comprehensive piece of work. The authors clearly outline the subject area and provide a clear overview of the salient points relating to adolescent low back pain. The paucity of research relating to low back pain incidence in adolescent athletes is highlighted and this study provides a useful starting point for a discussion of the potential etiological factors and management strategies for this population.

The authors rightly state that low back pain in childhood predicates such problems in the future and as such is an important area of research in the field of sports medicine.

The sample population used for the study is well described and is representative. The authors acknowledge the well-recognised limitations associated with questionnaires in such a population and clearly present the data, which appears to be representative. Analysis and reporting of the data is clearly described and any of the claims made are robustly defined and explained.

The results are clearly presented and relevant conclusions drawn. While unsurprising, these results provide evidence for the common clinical impression that low back pain in elite adolescent sportspeople is a significant problem and that every effort to address these issues early is required in order to reduce long term problems with back pain.

The authors clearly state the limitations of the study and discuss each in turn. They adequately deal with each of the limitations and make appropriate recommendations for future study. The authors make some interesting points in the discussion that, while not necessarily directly related to the data presented, provide useful points for discussion and recommendations for future work.

Discretionary Revisions

Since the authors infer that the higher training and competition volume in elite footballers may be related to the increased incidence of back pain, it may be useful to provide further information relating to the training/competition volume in this population. If there are any data relating to this that could be included or discussed, it would add to the extrapolation of the findings. Was any aspect of training volume assessed in the study? Further, some discussion on potential
reasons for the increased incidence of low back pain in elite adolescent Australian Rules footballers would be useful e.g. the nature of the sports vs. increased loading of developing skeleton.

Aside from these minor recommendations, this is a useful study that is appropriate for publication.

**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