Reviewer’s report

Title: The effect of a sports chiropractic manual therapy intervention on the prevention of hamstring and lower limb injuries in semi-elite Australian Rule footballers: A randomized controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 4 December 2009

Reviewer: Ian Horsley

Reviewer’s report:

The title is well defined and serves as a good starting point and informative beginning of the manuscript. My initial overall impression of the formatting of the text is that there has been quite a lot of use of the synonyms tool on MS word, which is not necessarily a bad thing, although I did find it a barrier to a smooth flow when reviewing the work.

Although the background to the nature of the sport is well documented, there is no explanation as to what defines a “semi-elite” player. Is it that these players play at a lower level, but are still full time athletes, or are they part time athletes? I feel that this needs some clarification within the manuscript.

Within the Methods section, under assignment, I feel that there is too much information regarding the composition of the assessment tools. A copy of each questionnaire could be place in the appendix to circumvent this.

Also in the Methods section, did all the subjects receive the same “best practice”, and how was this determined?

How the decision of the frequency of the scheduling was decided on in the intervention group, and did all subjects receive the same number of interventions?

How were muscle injuries diagnosed; were they diagnosed by clinical assessment of by ultrasound or MRI imaging. If imaging was utilized, were the grades of the injuries recorded, and the extent of the muscle damage assessed? If no imaging techniques were utilized, there is a possibility of some of the “hamstring pain” being referred from the lumbar spine, hip and pelvis- which would respond well to manipulative therapy.

In the Results section, the results are presented for low back pain- which is beyond the scope of this study, unless the title is refined accordingly.

Major compulsory Revisions

I general I feel that this could be a body of work which would be of interest, although I feel that there needs to be some work carried out to clarify the diagnosis of the injuries- if possible.

Minor essential revisions

Label for figure 1 on page 22, and actual figure is on page32.
Discretionary Revisions

I would like to see a breakdown, if possible, analysing which HVTA were utilized and comparing with outcomes, in order to identify any possible associations.

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