Reviewer's report

Title: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effectiveness of Mechanical Traction for Sub-Groups of Patients with Low Back Pain: Study Methods and Rationale.

Version: 1 Date: 23 February 2010

Reviewer: Deirdre Hurley

Reviewer's report:

The protocol for this trial is relevant to the current research priority of identifying subgroups for targeting interventions for low back pain.

Minor Essential Revisions
Shorten the introduction and summary of previous work to identify key points and their relevance to the present trial.
State in abstract and in methods (hypothesis) that you are testing for differences between groups.
In methods clarify the proportion of subjects being stratified to each subgroup.

Discretionary Revisions
Clarify rationale for exclusion of participants over 60 years of age.
Provide a reference for clinical signs of nerve root compression in eligibility Table.
State the anticipated drop out rate at follow-up and how this is addressed in the sample size calculation.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests