Reviewer’s report

Title: RCT Examining the Effect of Exercise in People with Rheumatoid Arthritis on Anti-TNFalpha Therapy Medication

Version: 1 Date: 26 March 2010

Reviewer: Claudia Witt

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsatory revisions:
Methods
• Please use common terminology for the study design (multicenter randomized controlled three armed study)
• Please rephrase you study question that it includes the following information (patients, intervention, control groups, outcomes).
Statistics:
• The statistics section should be enlarged. Please provide clear details about the primary endpoint and the primary comparison, of you have more than one clarify how many.
• Please provide the statistical hypothesis.
• The statistical analysis should use a more modern approach: I suggest ANCOVA adjusted for baseline values and Bonferoni-Holm instead of Bonferoni
• My major concern in this study is that the expected effect size is very large (Cohens’ d of 1) The authors quote that “Previous work by Van den Hout et al the minimum clinically important difference was taken to be a 0.2 reduction in the HAQ”. And they give a and of 0.2 which is huge. However they don’t provide the reference and I can’t believe that a clinically relevant difference has an effect size of 1. From a methodological and ethical perspective it makes no sense to run the study with three arms with such a small sample size if you don’t have data which shows that you can expect such a large effect.

Intervention:
• Provide more information about the interventions

Minor essential revisions
• I miss the study question in the abstract
• It seems not very precise to say: intra-articular corticosteroid injection within the previous month. Within the previous 4 weeks would be clearer.
• Was the selection of the possible participants sourced from a computer database of people per random? Please provide more details on the selection process.
• Randomization: Please provide software and who generated the sequence
• Hydrotherapy might be not the right term. Exercise therapy in a warm water pool might be better.
• Authors should provide information in which stage the study is, because the ethical approval is from September 97.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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