Reviewer's report

Title: Efficacy of hypnosis/guided imagery in fibromyalgia syndrome - a systematic review and meta-analysis of controlled trials

Version: 1 Date: 26 February 2011

Reviewer: Michael Hsu

Reviewer's report:

The authors report a systematic review and meta-analysis of hypnosis and guided imagery for treating FMS. The authors adhered fully to the PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews, and present the findings in a clear, organized fashion.

However, there are several Major Compulsory Revisions and some Minor Compulsory Revisions:

1. Two of the studies included in the meta-analysis (Fors et al and Grondhal et al) were single-session experiments, rather than clinical trials. The question being asked in a single-session experiment is completely different than that in a clinical trial. An analogy would be, does a single dose of morphine improve pain in the lab, as opposed to does the administration of morphine over 6 weeks have an impact on clinical pain. It would be logical to remove these two studies from the review and the meta-analysis.

2. The "large" effect size seen in HRQOL at follow-up is completely dependent on the Menziers et al study, which did not even report how many subjects dropped out. The only other study reporting HRQOL at follow-up is the Martinez et al study, which only had 2 subjects in each group. Therefore, it is inappropriate to combine these two very poor studies in a so-called "meta-analysis" and report that the effect size was "large". Please eliminate this part of the meta-analysis and the associated discussion about it, as it is misleading to the reader.

3. The subgroup analysis of "guided imagery" is also misleading, because this consists of only the Menziers et al study (with no report of how many subjects dropped out) and the Fors et al study, which was a single-session lab experiment. Please also eliminate this part of the results and discussion.

There are also several Minor Essential Revisions:

1. Under "Data sources and searches" in the Methods section, there is a syntax error in the search strategy for MEDLINE. There are 11 open-parentheses and 15 close-parentheses marks. Please fix this.

2. Under "Participants" in the Results section, the sentence "Four studies reported the number of persons screened and randomised with a median of 90 (range 86-94)%" is confusing to the reader. It should say, "Four studies reported the percentage among persons screened who were subsequently randomised with a median of 90 (range 86-94)%".
3. In that same paragraph, there is a typo in the sentence, "The median of the patients under hypnosis/guided imagery in the studies was 9 (range 2-26) and of controls 9 (range 4-27)." The latter range should be 2-27, not 4-27.

4. Under the "Quality ratings of trials" heading in the Results section, there appears to be an erroneous F score. An ICC of 0.97 should not be associated with an F of only 0.3.

5. Under the "Sensitivity analysis" subheading in the "Synthesis of results" heading in the Results section, the first sentence reads "...after removing four studies without ITT-analysis". There were actually five studies without ITT analysis. Please re-calculate the I^2 score if necessary, and change the results and discussion as appropriate.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 I have no competing interests.