Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and site of muscle tenderness in adults with nonspecific neck/shoulder pain

Version: 2  Date: 24 March 2011

Reviewer: Cesar Fernandez-de-Las

Reviewer's report:

Recommendation: Major Compulsory Revisions

The manuscript covers a clinically relevant topic, but the study design has several concerns about the validity of the results.

1. The comparison of women and men is completely invalid because the small numbers of males. I recommend to the authors to delete the men and focuss the study on women. This is a big bias. authors should delete all the data related to men. In addition, table 1 shows that men and women are completely difference in clinical data, which make the comparison not feasible.

2. The absence of a control group without pain limits the validity of the results. Is tenderness a common phenomenon? I completely agree with the authors that the relevance of the muscles is not restricted to the upper trapezius, but the desing does not clarify if tenderness is normal or not in healthy controls. I recommend to the authors to include a control group as they have a huge sample size of patients.

3. The reliability of the palpation of the assessed muscles is lack. How authors determined that tenderness was placed on the supraspinatus muscle and not on the upper trapezius. They comment something on this in the discussion but this is a big concern.

4. why authors focussed on tenderness and not on referred pain from these muscles? Recent studies have demonstrated the relevance of referred pain from these muscles in should and neck pain. Tenderness may be a common epi-phenomenon.

5. In the statiscal analysis. Why authors pool means of both sides? we do not know if there is side-to-side differences in tenderness? this is an important topic due to laterality of individuals. Authors should include sie in the ANOVA analysis.

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

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests