Reviewer's report

Title: Is the presence of Modic changes associated with the outcomes of different treatments? A systematic critical review

Version: 1 Date: 8 April 2011

Reviewer: Andrea M. Trescot

Reviewer's report:

Minor revision: The flow chart is on page 24 instead of being with its title on page 18

Discretionary revision: Consider a few lines to emphasize the potential importance of stratifying patients in treatment groups. This is an often overlooked issue, especially in the treatment of "nonspecific low back pain" and may be the primary reason that the majority of clinical trials for low back pain have failed. The analogy that I use with students and patients is that, while an appendectomy is a great procedure for appendicitis, it is a poor procedure for general abdominal pain, and it will do nothing for the patient with cholecystitis. Also, if your review has given you any insight for possible study design suggestions, that would be very useful.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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'