Author's response to reviews

Title: A randomised controlled trial of preventive spinal manipulation with and without a home exercise program for patients with chronic neck pain.

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear M.Aulakh,

Please find included our latest revised version of the manuscript entitled "A randomised controlled trial of preventive spinal manipulation with and without a home exercise program for patients with chronic neck pain". All comments and suggestions made by the reviewer (Dr Peloso) have been carefully addressed. These changes are highlighted in yellow. We would like to thank the reviewer for the comprehensive and helpful review of the manuscript. We believe it has helped us greatly improve our manuscript. We hope that these changes will satisfy the editorial board.

RESPONSE TO REVIEWER'S COMMENT

Comment 1
For the clinically acceptable pain - under the description of the outcomes - the authors describe clinically acceptable pain as a 2 point difference from baseline value during the preventative phase. It is not clear if this means that the patient changed by 2 points from their entry score into the trial, and this was defined as a "responder". For example, patient starts at 3.5 cm on a 10 cm scale upon entry into the trial. They improve in the open label symptomatic phase, and they go to a pain score of 1.5, and thus have a clinically meaningful response. Is this what the statement means? Please clarify. If so, it would be helpful to give a worked example.

Response: The reviewer clearly exposed the difficulty related to the definition of the “clinically acceptable pain” described in the manuscript. It is, as presently defined, difficult to understand the criteria used in our study. Thus we have clarified the definition and added a working example as suggested by the reviewer. Moreover, the clinically acceptable pain described in the results section relates to the previously described clinically acceptable pain.

Comment 2
Related to that, on page 13 in the description of the Preventive Phase results, it
is stated that "a majority of the participants in the control group (etc...), the SMT
group (etc...), and the SMT + exercise group (etc...) stayed below a level of
clinically acceptable pain during the preventive phase of the trial." What is the
definition of clinically acceptable pain here? same as above?

Response: The definition used in the results section is the one described in the
methods section (the definition have been clarified in both section).

Comment 3
What was the beginning score for the calculation of the clinically acceptable pain
for the preventive phase? Was it the beginning pain score upon entry into the trial
? i.e. before the symptomatic phase of the trial ?
or - was the beginning score for the preventive phase used ? i.e. the score at the
end of the symptomatic phase treatment ?

Response: Please refer to response to comment 1 and 2.

Comment 4
The control group should really be renamed the "attention-control" group, since
that it what it is.

Response: As suggested by the reviewer the control group was changed for
attention-control group throughout the manuscript.

Minor issues

Comment 1

page 14 - bottom of page: "Our results shown that all 3 groups showed primary
and secondary outcomes scores similar to those obtain following the
non-randomized ..... " The correct word is "obtained".

Response: As suggested by the reviewer the sentence was modified in the
revised version of the manuscript.

Comment 2

page 15 - top 1/3 of page "In our study, more than 75% of participants have been
experiencing ...." Have should be "had" or the sentence could be simplified to:
"In our study, more than 75% of participants experienced ..."

Response: As suggested by the reviewer the sentence was modified in the
revised version of the manuscript.