Reviewer's report

Title: Subgrouping patients on the basis of their individual course of low back pain over a six month period

Version: 3 Date: 30 March 2011

Reviewer: Steven Kamper

Reviewer's report:

Thanks to the authors for their efforts in replying to and addressing my comments on the manuscript. While I am satisfied with the responses in the most part, I still have a few outstanding concerns, these are listed below.

• Inclusion of patients with widely varying durations of symptoms makes interpretation of course very difficult.

• The clusters identified by the study represent a coarse description of groups of patients at some point in the course of their condition. The authors concede that the information here is not predictive, given that this is the case, it is still not clear to me what valuable information knowledge of cluster membership provides.

• Despite the stated justification for including only the highly compliant (with data provision) patients, and given the large proportion of excluded subjects I have serious doubts as to the representativeness of the sample, and hence generalisability of the findings.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'