Reviewer’s report

Title: Advanced practice physiotherapy in patients with musculoskeletal disorders: a systematic review

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Reviewer: Philip Van der Wees

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting study about advanced practice physiotherapists (APP). Overall, the methodology is sound and follows previous research in this area. The review added another nine studies to previous reviews in this field.

I have listed a number of essential revisions that should be addressed by the authors:

1. What remains unclear to me is whether studies were selected that assessed the role of APPs with or without further assessment of the required competencies in terms of additional training. Based on the selection criteria it seems that the authors only looked at the role: physiotherapists that perform certain advanced activities. However, in the discussion the authors critically discuss the review by Kilner which includes physiotherapists in an APP role but without advanced training. This left me with the question how the studies for the current review were selected.

2. In the introduction the authors already revealed some of their results to build their case for the need of the review: ‘nine additional studies have been published’. This should be rephrased.

3. Similar issue to revealing results in the methods: the categorization of studies was based on the actual results of the identified studies. A more general classification would be appropriate.

4. The methods section does not describe who selected the papers and rated their quality.

5. The authors reflect on the use of adapted and non-validated quality assessment instruments. However, they do not discuss the large confidence interval of the inter-rater reliability of the diagnostic validity appraisal tool.

6. In the results, reference #28 is mentioned as study that compared APP to orthopedic surgeons for diagnostic accuracy. However, table 1 does not show any comparisons for this study.

Minor comments:

7. The introduction refers to the new role of physiotherapists where countries now report implementation of this role, while using outdated references from

8. The references to ref #20 and 21 in the discussion seem out of place to me. Do they discuss the validation of the satisfaction appraisal tool?

**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 that I have no competing interests