Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence of multi-site musculoskeletal symptoms: a French cross-sectional working population-based study

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Reviewer: Susan Picavet

Reviewer's report:

This paper presents an analyses of the prevalence of musculoskeletal symptoms in the French working population with a focus on multi-site (or multi-region) symptoms. The paper may be improved using more focus what these figures say on the working French population, and what the real issue is with most symptoms being 'multi-site'.

Abstract
- Please add information on age of the population studied and that it is a questionnaire survey;
- I was confused on the use of MSS. Is it short for musculoskeletal symptoms or for multi-site musculoskeletal symptoms.
- Conclusion ‘that further research must be conducted (..)’ is too general

Methods
- In what year was the study carried out?
- Do I understand it correctly that the study population is a random selection of those having their annual HES and that as part of the survey they received a questionnaire?
- How long was the questionnaire, was it only the NORDIC, or were more items included, e.g. on life style etc? Was it filled in during the visit? What was the needed time to fill in? Wasn't there any HES data recorded for the study (e.g. information from the HES)?
- If the focus is on multi-site, why not also analyzing whether or not the coprevalence of multi site symptoms was higher than can be expected, given independence.

Results
- Could be more concise.
- I did not understand the sentence on page 9 ‘For a given anatomical site, (....) in only one site.

Discussion
- First sentence. The study did not estimate, the study presents an analyses of.
- I have never heard from ‘declaration bias’, you mean reporting bias?
- The comparison with the literature does not take into account the differences
between countries and the differences between working and non-working and/or general population into account. Because this is a major issue – also mentioned in the introduction – this should be better taken care of in the discussion. How do the French workers compare to other high income countries?
- What is the difference (or correspondence) between multi-site MSS and widespread pain?
- The comparison with the literature should be more concise and focused.
- If the difference between men and women is so important why not make it part of the research question?
- The sentence on page 14. Indeed, as the sites (…) to localized MSSs.is unclear.
- The lower half of the text on page 15 should be deleted.

Tables
- Too many tables, also figures can be used to present the data. For table 2 this might be a good idea. Remark: the figures in table 2 are among those with 30+ pain, the N mentioned should be on the participants with 30+pain.

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

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