Reviewer’s report

Title: The ANKLE TRIAL (ANKLE TReatment after Injuries of the Ankle Ligaments): is there any surplus of external support in the functional treatment of acute ankle sprain? : a randomised controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 25 February 2011

Reviewer: Domhnall MacAuley

Reviewer’s report:

This is a useful and important study and I wish the authors every success. My comments are to improve the protocol and, hopefully, the subsequent research paper. The title is difficult to understand- it doesn’t really tell us what the trial is about.

This group have considerable expertise in management diagnosis of ankle injury. There has been considerable literature in this field. This protocol ( and the subsequent research paper) would be improved by a more detailed and focused discussion on the literature to explain while this particular trial is needed. There has been previous work in this field- and, in particular, research on taping and bracing. Did the authors undertake a systematic review? What is the evidence from previous systematic reviews?

In the trial. More specific description of the severity of the injury for the purposes of recruitment.

More precise protocol details to ensure the protocols are consistent for each group. The physiotherapist cannot be blinded- might this affect the outcomes. Will patients be treated using different protocols in the same departments. Are the assessors blinded.

1. Will the study design adequately test the hypothesis? Probably but I think there is insufficient detail in this protocol

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing? No. More specific detail needed on the classification of injury, and more specific details needed on the type of taping, type of brace and rehabilitation protocol.

3. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition: if not, in what ways? Yes, but more detail is needed.

4. Is the writing acceptable? Yes, but there are some aspects of the writing that, while accurate, do not adequately explain the meaning. Eg In the title and introduction, the translation may be accurate but the precise meaning is difficult to define.

Domhnall Mac Auley 25/2/2011
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: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.