Author's response to reviews

Title: Osteopathic intervention in chronic non-specific low back pain: a systematic review

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Version: 2 Date: 11 January 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
To the Editor, BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders
11 January 2013

Osteopathic intervention in chronic non-specific low back pain: a systematic review

Responses to Peer Review (in bold/italics after peer comments)

Thank you to the two reviewers – their comments are helpful and I think have created an improved manuscript.

Reviewer 1 report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) The precise research question that drives the review was not explicitly stated. This is essential for the reader to be able accurately assess whether your methods were adequate to address it.

This has been made more explicit in the Background section: “What is the clinical trial evidence for the osteopathic intervention in CNSLBP, and does the research translate into clinical practice by testing the intervention as it is applied in the everyday practice?”

2) The Methods section would benefit from having more structure. It is customary to have subheads such as “Search Criteria,” “Selection Methods,” “Quality Rating,” etc.

Subheadings have been added (from PRISMA checklist) to make the Methods section more clear: Eligibility, Search process, Study selection, Data collection and risk of bias analysis, Synthesis of results.

3) The inclusion and exclusion criteria for articles were not explicitly stated.

Now explicit in Methods – Eligibility.

4) The Results and Discussion section should be two separate sections, since they have different functions. “Results” presents the findings of your review process, and “Discussion” discusses the implications, makes comparisons to other studies, etc.

These sections have been separated. The BMC MSD guide for authors of research papers was followed which allowed for Results and Discussion to be combined, but I accept it is an improvement to separate them in this case.

5) Limitations were not explicitly addressed.

New section added on limitations, with more detail.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) It is usual to have a figure that visually represents how you selected and excluded articles based on your inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Figure 1 included as a flowchart of selection and exclusion.


2) Table 2 is somewhat confusing. It would help to include totals; as it is, the reader can’t tell whether all the numbers below the first row are part of the 809 or in addition to it. Please clarify your entire process of article identification.

Previous Table 2 deleted as it was unclear. Process of elimination now explained in Figure 1 and in text.

Reviewer 2 report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1) The methods section is missing essential information. Identify the inclusion/exclusion criteria for the systematic review in the text. Identify any rules determined a priori for data synthesis. This should include rules for pooling or not pooling data in a meta-analysis.

Methods section now has subheadings (from PRISMA checklist) to make these issues more clear: Eligibility, Search process, Study selection, Data collection and risk of bias analysis, Synthesis of results.

New statement made in Synthesis of results section about how data synthesis and pooling may occur, and the plan for a meta-analysis if the studies had homogeneity.

2. There is no formal results section. A systematic review requires a formal results section that describes the studies included and the synthesis of the study results. It should include presentation of the risk of bias/quality of evidence results.

The Results section has now been separated from Discussion. The BMC MSD guide for authors of research papers was followed which allowed for Results and Discussion to be combined, but I accept it is an improvement to separate them in this case.

The section now has subheadings, including a risk of bias analysis section and table.

3. Tabulation of essential information is has not been provided for included studies. Provide a table for the risk of bias evaluation by item. Include a table of study characteristics and results: patient characteristics (inclusion/exclusion criteria), treatment, control, outcome measures, sample sizes, randomization, effects...

New Table 2 provides study characteristics and new Table 3 provides the full risk of bias scores for each item

4. The abstract reflects the missing methods and results described above. The abstract states that the results of two disparate trials were combined but does not say how or why the results can be combined.

Abstract has been re-written to better reflect the summary.

5. There is no comparison or contrast to the previous published systematic review demonstrating its contribution to new knowledge.

Contrasts with Systematic Review of 2003 added in Results, and an explanation regarding the differences of conclusion have been added in the Discussion.

We hope this covers the queries

Yours sincerely

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