Reviewer’s report

Title: Claim-based recurrent low back pain; a 8-year decrease in prevalence in adults under 65 years of age.

Version: 2 Date: 24 February 2013

Reviewer: Paolo Pillastrini

Reviewer’s report:

Comments for Authors

The article is surely well written and deals with a fundamental issue, i.e. the annual prevalence of recurrent low back pain in a large Canadian population over a 8-year period. The methods, results and their discussion are also well addressed and presented to the readers.

Nevertheless, there are some revisions to be solved before its acceptance for publication. Below you can find them point by point.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Title, page 1

It’s true that the “8-year decrease in prevalence in adults under 65 years of age” is probably the most relevant result obtained by the Authors, however is not the unique and in my opinion does not convey to the readers the real intent and complexity of the conducted analysis. Authors could think to change the title into something more similar to “Prevalence of claim-based recurrent low back pain in Canadian population over a 8-year period between 2000 and 2007” or “Prevalence of claim-based recurrent low back pain: a secondary analysis of administrative health care registries”.

Key words, page 1

The key words are too generic and at least some fundamental words are missing, e.g. “prevalence”, “recurrent”, “low back pain”, “claim” or “claim-based”.

Methods, page 5

The subparagraph “Description of the Quebec’s population” is not pertinent to Methods section (apart from the sentence [In this study – 65 years of age.] that could be moved to the next subparagraph) and should be moved to Discussion section where deemed appropriate by the Authors.

Discussion, page 10

I do not understand the sentence [Our data showed that adults – than the retired population.]. Looking at Figure 2B it is possible to notice that in 2000 women retired population prevalence rates were very similar to those ones of adults still
at work, while in 2007 were even clearly superior. The sentence used by the Authors is therefore correct for men but contradictory of the obtained results with respect to women.

Discussion, page 12

The sentences [A recent review of Koes – before further investigation is initiated.] are not well related with the previous part of the discussion and furthermore result misleading. Thus authors need to connect and reformulate them clearly. In fact, it’s true that recommendations from clinical guidelines are mostly similar in that “red flags” should be early identified and routine use of imaging avoided, but imaging is recommended also at first in cases of suspected serious pathology (i.e. red flags). As far as “yellow flags” are concerned I do not find Authors’ explanation to be compelling, in fact clinical guidelines recommend to identify “yellow flags” both in case of no improvement, but also directly at first.

Minor Essential Revisions

Background, page 3

- Space between back pain and [14].

Discussion, page 9

- Check the consecutio temporis through all the discussion. In fact, it has been used either the past tense (revealed, 2° line page 9), or the present form (show, 8° line page 9).

Page 10

- In the sentence [This could be due to – security rules at work.] replace “of” with “among”.

Page 11

- In the sentence [Additionally, based on a – the age category of 70-74 [40].] replace “decanal” with “decennial”.

Page 13

- In the two sentences [Indeed, the absence of clinical – most recent definitions.] and [Indeed, administrative data – episode which is ongoing [18].] the word “indeed” is repeated twice.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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