Reviewer’s report

Title: Implementation of specific strength training among industrial laboratory technicians: Long-term adherence and effect on back, neck and upper extremity pain

Version: 1 Date: 19 August 2013

Reviewer: Eva Vingård

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for letting me review this manuscript. The work place is a good arena for interventions but still hard to accomplish. In this study a program on working hours 3x20 minutes/week during 20 weeks under supervision was tested in laboratory technicians, an occupational group with a lot of static work postures. The results are encouraging even if the differences are small but all assessments go in the desired direction. I have only a few comments.

1. Most people don’t have substantial pain as shown by the low pain score. Interventions among healthy and more or less pain free individuals can’t give any positive results. You can’t judge the intervention program by that. It is like giving smoke cessation programs to non-smokers. The effect will be zero. I think you should discuss that a little more. You have done special analyses on your “cases” but nowhere is the number of the cases mentioned. >= 3 on the pain scale is still a low grade of pain for most of “cases” and just what you expect in a working population.

2. Age is of interest in a pain group. Nowhere is the age span mentioned just the mean age. Where there any differences in different age groups? The power must be enough for at least two age groups I suppose.

3. And even more interesting: men and women! Usually women report more pain than men. In your study most individuals were women but still. Can you divide the group in the two sexes the article will be improved.

4. I suppose most of the study group is right handed but it ought to be mentioned as you did not find anything on the left side.

5. Your opinion that those in the first training group did not train much during the second period is not based on facts if I understand it right. Why do you think your program has that low compliance? They kept their lower level of pain maybe because of continued training (and as I said before in a healthy working population you can’t expect too much results).

6. As this is an open review process maybe you can have some interest in an article we wrote a couple of years ago:

Vingård E, Blomkvist V, Rosenblad A, Lindberg P, Voss M, Alfredsson L, Josephson M. A physical fitness programme during paid working hours - impact on health and work ability among women working in the social service sector: a
three year follow up study.

Comments on the questions from the editor:
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
Yes

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
See above. Some improvements are needed

3. Are the data sound?
Yes as far as I can see.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes. Maybe you can shorten it a bit.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Mostly. See comments above

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Could be improved. See above.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?
To my opinion yes, but I am not a native English writer.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no competing interests.