Reviewer’s report

Title: The intra- and inter-rater reliability of five clinical muscle performance tests in patients with and without neck pain.

Version: 1 Date: 7 July 2013

Reviewer: Kieran O’Sullivan

Reviewer’s report:

A well justified, well designed study whose methods were trying to reflect the clinical situation where muscle performance tests may differ from those described in research papers due to equipment and time constraints.

Major Compulsory Revisions

• The conclusion of the abstract, the discussion, and the conclusion of the paper itself should define which tests had more or less reliability, as it is clear that some tests had very good agreement, and others were very poor. It could be stated that all tests had moderate to substantial agreement, with the exception of the new test which was remarkably poorer.

• The figures were not attached to the manuscript I received, so I cannot comment on them. They will require further inspection.

• The discussion would benefit from a brief consideration of how good such muscle performance tests are in determining (1) healthy controls from subjects in pain and (2) influencing clinical practice. It would appear that the usefulness and validity of these tests in isolation is very limited, especially considering the way our understanding of pain neurophysiology has evolved in recent years.

• Tables – clarify the measurement scale for SEM e.g. secs, cm, mmHg

• Introduction: descriptions of “supine crook” and “supine hook” was confusing/unclear

• The abstract, methods and discussion should all clarify that the inter-rater reliability appears to reflect within-day comparisons only, with between-day inter-rater reliability likely to result in even greater differences.

Minor Essential Revisions

Grammatical and formatting errors (I have just listed a few);

• It is not clear why “The” is capitalised when stating “The X test”

• Introduction: space between “ICCAgreement”

• Methods, participants: “a…………..groups”

• Results: “last ….measurementS”

• Discussion: “mean differences are all minor than the tests’ measurement”
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, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests