Author's response to reviews

Title: Web-Based Therapeutic Exercise Resource Center as a Treatment for Knee Osteoarthritis: A Prospective Cohort Pilot Study

Authors:

M Alison Brooks (brooks@ortho.wisc.edu)
John E Beaulieu (johnb@vhikits.com)
Herbert H Severson (herb@ori.org)
Christa M Wille (cmwille@wisc.edu)
David Cooper (david@vhikits.com)
Jeff M Gau (jeffg@ori.org)
Bryan C Heiderscheit (heiderscheit@ortho.wisc.edu)

Version: 3
Date: 3 March 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
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Authors:

M. Alison Brooks  brooks@ortho.wisc.edu
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Jeff M. Gau  jeffg@ori.org
Bryan Heiderscheit  heiderscheit@ortho.wisc.edu

Version: 3     Date: March 3, 2014

Authors’ response to reviews as follows: see over
Reviewer 1 report:

Title: Web-Based Therapeutic Exercise Resource Center as a Treatment for Knee Osteoarthritis: A Prospective Cohort Pilot Study

Version: 2  Date: 20 January 2014

Reviewer: Soren Thorgaard Skou

The manuscript has improved following the revisions. Below are some further comments and questions that must be addressed.

Major Compulsory Revisions (MCR)

MCR1: Methods. TERC Intervention. The intervention has now been elaborated. However, it can still be improved with more information on how the exercise was performed, intensity, etc. I know that it is probably not possible for you to make the exercise available as a supplementary file, but that would improve the possibility to reproduce your study for others.

We feel we have provided adequate description of the TERC intervention in the previous revision. We remind the reviewers and editorial staff that this is a small pilot study to demonstrate the ability to deliver the intervention and to gather feedback on the intervention in order to proceed with a larger controlled clinical trial. In addition the prescribed exercises themselves are not novel or unique but instead the method in which they are delivered and progressed is. As such the detailed protocol for development of this intervention is proprietary information. We feel we have been appropriately responsive to all of the comments from both Reviewer 1 and 2 in all revisions of the manuscript. We defer to the editorial staff as to whether they wish to consider the current revision for publication without the inclusion of the requested information.

MCR 2: Methods, Primary Outcome Measures. Referring to the CONSORT statement (http://www.consort-statement.org/consort-statement/3-12---methods/item6a_outcomes/) having several primary outcomes is not recommended. I would recommend that you only have one (usually the one used for your sample size calculations) or two primary outcomes and move the rest to secondary outcome (+move the demographic variables to a headline called “Baseline data”).

Baseline demographic variables and self-efficacy have been removed from the primary outcome measures paragraph. Two primary outcome measures remain, mSF-WOMAC and WHO-QOL.

MCR 3: Results, first paragraph and Discussion, eight paragraph. I think you
need to address this comment from my last review more thoroughly: “Only 80% (52 out of 65) completed both the baseline and 8-week follow-up. Please address this as a potential limitation to the results. Perhaps the last 20% did not improve in symptoms and was not satisfied with the internet-based intervention?”

This sentence has been added to the limitations. “It is possible that these 13 patients did not improve or were not satisfied with the internet-based intervention. “

Minor Essential Revisions (MER)

MER 1: Abstract, Methods and Methods, Participants. You write that 65 individuals diagnosed with mild/moderate knee OA based on symptoms and radiographs were enrolled. How did you know that the patients had mild to moderate knee OA radiography, when the radiographs were obtained as part of the patient’s routine care. I guess you got the results from their physician, but please elaborate on how the diagnosis/rating of the patient OA status was given.

Once patients were identified as potentially eligible, their medical record was reviewed, including plain radiographs, to insure that they met radiographic classification criteria for mild/moderate knee OA. I have not included this detail in the methods section of the manuscript but will do so at the discretion of the editorial staff.

MER 2: Background. You now state: “The TERC is the first comprehensive web based system designed to evaluate, prescribe, monitor and adjust exercise programs for knee OA patients.”

You have included a paper in the reference list (Journal of medical Internet research 2013, 15(11):e257) also working with web-based intervention for knee and/or hip OA. Is this intervention not applicable to the sentence stated above/what is new in you study compared to that one?

This point is well taken. The Joint2move program cited in this article conceptually does many of the functions carried out by the TERC. The difference in the two approaches is that the Joint2move program is designed to encourage patients with knee and hip OA to continue and progress with physical activities that they are currently performing. The Joint2move program does not introduce any new exercise prescriptions for subjects.

Unlike the Joint2move program, the TERC introduces strengthening and stretching exercises designed to improve impaired muscle function, reduce stress and loading on the knee joint and reduce physical disability. We have modified the sentence(s) in question to better reflect this key difference

Minor issues not for publication (MIP)

MIP 1: Abstract, Results. “BMIor” should be “BMI or”
MIP 2: Background, third paragraph. “thetheir” should be “their”
MIP 3: Background, third paragraph. “tomanage” should be “to manage”
MIP 4: Background, fourth paragraph. “withinindividuals” should be “within individuals”

All of these minor corrections have been made.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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
Reviewer 2 Report:

Title: Web-Based Therapeutic Exercise Resource Center as a Treatment for Knee Osteoarthritis: A Prospective Cohort Pilot Study

Version: 2  Date: 30 January 2014

Reviewer: Daniel Bossen

The authors did a good job in improving the manuscript. All points are adequately addressed.

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 declare that I have no competing interests