Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Evaluation of pain and function after two home exercise programs: A randomized controlled trial on women with chronic neck pain

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 17 September 2013

**Reviewer:** Per Kjaer

**Reviewer’s report:**

General comment
This is an interesting paper that investigates two interventions for women with chronic neck pain. The interesting part is the analysis of those adhering to the programme (completers) and comparison to those who do not in relation to clinical relevant outcomes (responders). However, in the current form the important messages from the study are unclear. After a thorough revision the study definitely adds important new knowledge to the management of people with chronic neck pain even though the study sample is very small and the power of the study seem not to be considered.

I have many concerns about the paper and I recommend a thorough review of the content where the consort statements [1] for the conduction of randomized trials and for reporting are adhered to and if not the authors have to give arguments why. Furthermore, several parts of the method section are inadequately and inconsistently described and lack definitions in important areas. Part of the methods are reported together with results, which I find very confusing.

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

**Abstract**
Page 3: Please consider to revise the aims to reflect what is actually done.
Please revise conclusion (moderate).

**Background**
Page 4: The background needs to further elaborate on adherence its influence on the treatment outcome. Especially the last paragraph needs to be revised.
The aims are very general and do not cover the main focus for the paper, which seem to be analyses of these adhering to exercise.
Page 5: The description of the study hypothesis after the aims no not cover the second or maybe the primary hypothesis that those adhering to exercise will have a better result. Please include this aspect.

**Methods**
Somewhere, an explanation of the variability of the 4-6 month follow up is needed.

Subjects line 6: Explain who and where the examination was performed.

Randomisation line 8: Explain what is meant by "skilled physiotherapist".

Page 9: first paragraph: redundancy of the exercise diary, the support for the exercise section is very vague. This may be important information and we need to know if all participants had the same support and exactly how it was.

Page 10: Statistics, please provide means and medians with 95% confidence intervals also. An explanation of the wide range for the first follow up is needed.

The method section should also include definitions of responders and a section on sample size considerations. What differences are expected? What is clinically relevant?

Results

Page 12, last two lines. The Figure legend says month, not week?

Page 13, completers and responders: this reporting has not been introduced in the study aims or in the method section. Please revise method section to include the first two paragraphs from this section – and rephrase.

Discussion

The discussion lack discussion on the limitations of the study, especially sample size. Please elaborate further on this.

Conclusion

The conclusion does not really cover what was found in this study. It did not matter which type of exercise. Only half of those adhering had a clinical relevant improvements. Please rephrase and stick to what was investigated.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Flaw in legends fig 2 (month should be week)

Table 2: please keep headings with table – very difficult to read.


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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests