Reviewer’s report

Title: Exercise programme with telephone follow-up for people with hand osteoarthritis - protocol for a randomised controlled trial.

Version: 1 Date: 12 December 2013

Reviewer: Linda Li

Reviewer’s report:

General

This is a study protocol that examines the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a 12-week RCT plus telephone follow-up, compared to a usual care control, for people with hand OA. This study has received funding from the Norwegian Fund for Post-Graduate Training in Physiotherapy and the Norwegian Rheumatism Association.

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

1. Please state the hypotheses of the study.

2. Please clarify in the Methods and Figure when the baseline assessment will be conducted. Ideally, it should be before randomization.

3. The control group will not receive specialized OT intervention for 6 months. Please comment on the steps to minimize attrition during the waiting period.

4. The authors state that FIHOA and the PSFS will be performed at 3 months post-randomization. Please clarify if these primary outcome measures will be done at baseline, ideally prior to randomization, and at 6 months. If not, please explain why.

5. Health resource utilization – please clarify if an existing health resource utilization measure is used. If not, what steps will be taken to examine its measurement property?

6. What is the authors’ strategy for handling missing data?

7. Health Economics section – please clarify that incremental cost-effective ratio is calculated ‘between groups’. Also, it appears that the authors will construct cost-effectiveness acceptability curves, but the description of this analysis is somewhat obscure. Please revise.

8. ‘Sample size’ section – I am a bit confused by the description of the MCID of FIHOA. Is the 10% change an established MCID for this outcome measure? If so, please remove ‘e.g.’

9. Will the author register this study in an open RCT registry?

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Under ‘Health Economics’, it should be ‘….applying both health system and societal perspective’ rather than a ‘health-care perspective’.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

None

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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