Reviewer's report

Title: A Structural Model of Impairment and Functional Limitation in Rheumatoid Arthritis

Version: 2 Date: 1 November 2004

Reviewer: Leigh Callahan

Reviewer's report:

General
This manuscript tests a model of impairment and functional limitation based on the disablement process in a sample of data from rheumatoid arthritis patients. Overall, the manuscript does not do a good job of presenting a strong rationale of the model and why it is important to know that the model with only a fair fit is important.

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

1. The Background needs to explain more thoroughly the authors' definition of impairment and why it is important to understand its effect on functional limitation. They also need to explain the need for understanding their definition.

2. In the Patients and Methods Section, under the patients heading there needs to be a better description of the sample construction. Although the data are presented elsewhere, enough needs to be presented in this manuscript for the readers to have a sense of things without retrieving other manuscripts. For instance, where the patients consecutive? How many sites were included?

3. The authors should explain why they do not have a relationship between joint deformity and joint inflammation? Do they think there is a possible interaction or additive or multiplicative effect? Could inflamed joints lead to deformity? Could some type of relationship explain the fair fit?

4. The discussion does not really address why the fair fit of the model is important.

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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. There are a number of typos throughout the manuscript.

2. Figure 1 needs more information in the legend for joint deformity abbreviations and functional measures.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have not competing interests.