Reviewer’s report

Title: Strength of agreement between diagnoses reached by clinical examination and available reference standards: A prospective validity study of 216 patients with lumbopelvic pain and/or symptoms referred into the lower extremity.

Version: 1 Date: 11 January 2005

Reviewer: Jonathan Hill

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is a useful piece of work which needs to be published as it covers important questions regarding the validity of clinical examination tests used to diagnose low back pain.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The authors need to present their work following published guidelines for reporting studies of diagnostic accuracy (see Bossuyt P et al 2003, BMJ). More information on the index test methods would be helpful (particulary for the ZJ & SIJ tests). However, it is the presentation of the results that needs the most revision in the light of the above guidelines: a flow diagram of participant recruitment is strongly recommended, some mention of sensitivity and specificity for each test, report the time interval from index tests to reference standards and any treatment administered in between, report estimates of diagnostic accuracy and measures of statistical uncertainty (e.g. 95% confidence intervals) for each test etc.... The study appears to be sound, but has not been written up or presented with the adequate rigour needed to be acceptable for publication.

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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)

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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 importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
‘I declare that I have no competing interests’