Reviewer's report

Title: Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment for Low Back Pain: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials

Version: 2 Date: 6 May 2005

Reviewer: Dave D Baxter

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General
Thank you for the opportunity to review the revised manuscript and comments submitted by Professor Licciardone and colleagues. I have read these materials carefully and would consider that, with one important exception, the authors have adequately addressed the points raised in the earlier review by Dan Cherkin and myself.

The exception derives from the authors' justification of the 'difference' in osteopathic manipulation: particularly that such manipulation is practised by fully licensed physicians (in the USA), and that such manipulation is broader in the range of techniques used compared to chiropractic.

In the first instance, the current review includes trials completed in the United Kingdom, where osteopaths are not licensed physicians, and indeed have only recently received statutory recognition and regulation (through the General Osteopathic Council). Although the authors have elected not to address this point (included as a discretionary revision in my last report) on the grounds that it is a complex issue which is 'beyond the scope of our study's purpose', I would suggest, given that this represents the central thrust of the authors' argument for the unique status of osteopathic manipulation, this issue needs some comment.

Secondly, whilst the contrast with chiropractic manipulation may indeed be useful, this would hardly differentiate osteopathic manipulation from that performed by physiotherapists. If this is indeed the case, then it is worthy of comment; if not, then the distinction between OMT and physiotherapy-performed manipulation is important.

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

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)