Reviewer's report

Title: Measuring troublesomeness of chronic pain by location

Version: 1 Date: 4 October 2005

Reviewer: Alison M Elliott

Reviewer's report:

General
The aim of this paper was to determine whether the "troublesomeness grid" is an appropriate measure to assess the burden of pain in different body regions.

Overall, this was a well written paper looking at the development and testing of a new measure which could be a useful addition to pain questionnaires. The paper comes from a well-respected team in the field of musculoskeletal pain. The presentation is clear, the methods used are well described and analysis is appropriate.

This paper needs minor revisions only before publication.

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

No major revisions are required before publication.

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

Abstract: The authors should be consistent in the use of the term "troublesomeness grid" throughout.

Background: The background of the project is fine and the aim of the work is clearly stated.

Methods: The range of the scores on the CPG intensity and disability scales should be stated as has been done for the EQ 5D and GHQ 12.

Results: It would be useful to state what the IASP definition of chronic pain is for those unfamiliar with this definition.

I would like to see the response rate details for the main study in addition to the pilot study. Also the percentage of people with chronic pain in the main study should be given.

The first reference to tables in the text is to Table 2 not Table 1 and appears in section 1 of the results on page 11. In fact Table 2 refers to criterion validity and not face validity and the reference to Table 2 needs to be moved to the end of section 2 of the Results.

When talking about Table 1 the authors state that all but one of the correlations were statistically significant, but all the correlations shown in the table are significant.
Figures 2-4 should be inserted after reference to the box and whisker plots to let the reader know the data is being shown as part of the paper.

Discussion: The authors conclude that differences in non-response rates may be partly accounted for by differences in time frames used. Why were the same time frames not used?

Figure 1: It is not clear from the figure that respondents were asked to specify what their other pains were this is only clear in the text.

Table 1: Euroqol should be replaced with EQ 5D.
The symbol referring to the main study data appears to be in the wrong place. Presumably not just pain intensity correlations for low back pain were taken from the main study.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

No such revisions to suggest.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests