Reviewer's report

Title: Costs of shoulder pain in primary care: a prospective cohort study

Version: 3 Date: 25 August 2006

Reviewer: Jens Ivar Brox

Reviewer's report:

General

The manuscript is improved.

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

From page six I understand that patients were selected if..., and had not consulted their GP or received any form of treatment for the afflicted shoulder in the preceding three months.

From table 2 I understand that 26% of the total sample and 43% of the high cost patients had taken sick leave for shoulder pain during the last 2 months.

Does this mean that the patients had taken sick-leave for the unafflicted shoulder, or did they consult other health care professionals to receive sick leave in the previous 2 months, or did they take sick leave without consulting any?

I just do not find it logical that patients who were selected because they did not receive any treatment for the afflicted shoulder in the preceeding three months had taken sick leave for shoulder pain.

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

Persistent shoulder pain is better defined, but since this is the major outcome variable it should be even better described. The readers should not have to check details by reading a reference article. Furthermore, how was the cut-off choosen?

The control group were treated according to the national guideline for shoulder pain and the costs were compared with a group who had more or less the same treatment. Since many of the patients had some complaints at 6 months follow-up: can we expect patients to have a clinically significant improvement from other treatment? And at what price? Would total costs increase or decrease?

Findings from previous studies may add valuable information to the discussion

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential 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 interest