Reviewer’s report

Title: A Diagnostic Support Tool for Lumbar Spinal Stenosis - A self-administered, self-reported history questionnaire

Version: 2 Date: 12 August 2007

Reviewer: Christopher Maher

Reviewer’s report:

General

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

The manuscript contains insufficient information to judge its value. It would be very helpful if the authors revised the manuscript and provided all the information requested in the STARD checklist. At the moment the majority of items from the STARD checklist are inadequately addressed. As an illustration the authors do not describe the study population, inclusion and exclusion criteria or participant sampling.

Of the issues above the critical issue for me is that the manuscript provides no information on the criteria used by the investigators to diagnose LSS. I accept the authors’ view that LSS is essentially a clinical diagnosis, and I agree that the consensus classification of a group of experts can be used as a reference standard in a diagnosis study. But for the study to be interpretable the authors need to provide an outline of the clinical features that the experts used to confirm that a subject did, or did not, have LSS.

The authors have published a related study in European Journal of Pain. (Konno S, Hayashino Y, Fukuhara S, Kikuchi S, Kaneda K, Seichi A, Chiba K, Satomi K, Nagata K, Kawai S. Development of a clinical diagnosis support tool to identify patients with lumbar spinal stenosis. Eur Spine J. 2007 Jun 5; [Epub ahead of print]). I think it would be useful to compare the results of the two studies in the discussion. There is also a systematic review on the diagnosis of LSS published in Spine in 2006 and again I think the authors need to discuss this review. At the moment the manuscript is not provided with an appropriate context.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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)
**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:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'