Reviewer's report

Title: The effectiveness of motorized lumbar traction in the management of lumbo sacral nerve root pain: A pragmatic randomised controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 7 May 2007

Reviewer: Christopher McCarthy

Reviewer's report:

General

A useful pilot study that addressed it’s aims. One could imagine the results were not a surprise to the authors, in light of the same pattern occurring in virtually all MSK research trials. A little bit of physio versus a little bit more is not different at three and six and twelve months. I agree with the authors conclusion that both traction and MT need to be tested against a minimal intervention “usual care” arm. We still don’t know how much of the effects we are observing are natural resolution.

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

You have reported the study well and made it clear that the work was a pilot study. You should reflect that in the title of the paper.

SPECIFIC

Pg 3: State that the patients have been referred to Physiotherapy
Pg 6 Insert references for the outcome measures
Pg 8 It is difficult to see why you excluded Mulligan and McKenzie. Approaches often used by Manual therapists.
Pg 9 Need to state assumptions for parametric testing were tested and met
Pg 9 May be worth making a comment in the discussion that the patients received the same amount of attention from the physio regardless of treatment group.
Figures – Graphs RMDQ, VAS scales etc present the graphs using the full scale of the questionnaire ie 24 and 100 etc.
Tables. State the mean differences with 95% CIs.

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.