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: 2 Date: 15 August 2007

Reviewer: Julie Fritz

Reviewer’s report:

General

The authors have done an excellent job of revising this manuscript. The revised version reflects what was done in a more scientifically appropriate manner and acknowledges the shortcomings of the approach much better. I have a few additional comments that I believe will strengthen the manuscript further.

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

In the Discussion section the authors characterize their study as "high quality". While I agree that the approach used in this study represents important advances over some of the previous studies in this area, I do not believe it is appropriate to characterize this study as "high quality" considering the shortcomings primarily related to sample size. I recommend removing this term and simply characterizing how this manuscript advances previous work.

The authors consider the use of more specific treatment parameters in this study as one way this research advances prior studies. I agree with this characterization, however the authors appear to be concluding that these treatment parameters were "appropriate" based on a survey of practitioners. We do not know if these parameters are the "best". The reason they represent an improvement over previous studies in my mind is that they were well-defined, which is important, not that they are "better" - we simply do not know this. In addition, the treatment parameters used in this study are still somewhat broad - do the authors know what parameters were actually used or have any comment on this? My recommendation is that the authors present a more nuanced and thorough discussion of the issue of treatment parameters in the Discussion section of this paper because this is an important issue for future research in this area.

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

Page 4 - was the SLR considered positive if symptoms were reproduced at any
angle, or was a threshold used? (45 degrees, 70 degrees, etc.)

Please clarify if all treatment components (education, exercise, manual therapy) were required for all patients, or if therapists used their judgment to include or omit components for individual patients.

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.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'