Reviewer's report

Title: Low back pain education and short term quality of life: a randomized trial [ISRCTN48558333]

Version: 5 Date: 27 November 2006

Reviewer: Wilfried Mau

Reviewer's report:

General
The revised is improved but several points still need to be clarified.

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

1. My main concern expressed in the first remark is still not adequately ad-dressed by the authors. The problem of non-specific effects of an intervention such as the back school program does affect study subjects in general, not only house-wives. Therefore, the minimun acknowledgement of this problem by the authors is an extension of the study limitations, f. e., in the first paragraph on page 12: Future stud-ies should include a non-specific activity of the control group of a same duration as the intervention group. A further limitation is the rather short disease duration of 9 months, compared with typical patients suffering from non-specific chronic low back pain since several years.

3. The reply to remark number three, regarding the complete and exact clinical assessment, mentioned on page 4. The clinical characteristics of the patients in table one are rather scanty: chronic sciatalagy (do the authors mean sciatica?). Apart from the patients' history significant results of the examination should be added in order to give an impression of the comparability of both groups.

6. Repetition of data in tables 3 - 5: these tables include the same data set and repeat the follow-up data. The reader would like to see all relevant information with one glance, f. e., columns 2 and 3 baseline and follow up data of the back school group, columns 4 and 5 the respective data of the clinic group, followed by columns, which include the p-values concerning the comparisons of different pairs of data in the previous columns.

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests.