Reviewer’s report

Title: Validation of a new test that assesses functional performance of the upper quarter (FIT-HaNSA) in patients with shoulder pathology

Version: 1 Date: 6 November 2006
Reviewer: Sally Green

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is an interesting body of work and the authors should be encouraged to continue and to publish more substantive results as they come available

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

The work is premature, perhaps too premature to be published, and I believe at the least the following revisions need to be considered.

1. Background: The introduction states that these has been relatively little work developing standardised functional tests for the shoulder that may be used to assess patients over time, yet this paper does not address this need and is instead reporting a measure which, at this stage, can be used only to discriminate between those with shoulder pathology and those without. This needs to be more clearly laid out in the introduction and objectives.

2. The background should also include more discussion on why this observed measure is needed in addition to the well researched self reported function scales for the shoulder (of which there are many, two of these have been used as construct validity references in this paper). The developed test is relatively complex compared to a questionnaire, and the rationale for why it is needed should be covered in the introduction, particularly as the paper demonstrates good correlation between the developed tool and the SPADI and the DASH. What is this tool adding over use of the SPADI and the DASH?

3. The method of tool development is interesting and I would like to see more detail about this in the paper.

4. It is not surprising that those with shoulder pathology have less endurance than those with shoulder pathology. The greatest omission from this paper is assessment of reliability. Until the test is demonstrated to be consistent on repetition it will be of limited use as a discriminatory measure and cannot be used as an evaluative measure. This needs to be much more explicitly discussed.

5. The first sentence of the discussion states that this study provides preliminary support for the use of a new functional performance test…. I am not convinced that this statement is backed up by the data as the sample size is small, not all results are significant, there are many untested assumptions (as stated by the authors) and there is no report of reliability.

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

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory 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

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests