Reviewer's report

Title: Near-infrared (NIR) spectroscopy. A new method for arthroscopic evaluation of low grade degenerated cartilage lesions. Results of a pilot study

Version: 1 Date: 20 March 2007

Reviewer: Nicola Maffulli

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a potentially relevant article
My perplexity is that it is a single centre, small scale preliminary study of lesions which may be pre-clinical

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

The authors should make clear that, reliable as this novel assessment modality is, we are still looking at only 12 patients.
A major issue is whether the lesions identified were clinically relevant: it is well documented that there is discrepancy between morphological appearance and clinical picture. The fact that an area of cartilage presents abnormalities at probing and at imaging does not mean much unless there is convergence with clinical data. In the cohort presented, the articular cartilage changes may well be secondary to the meniscal injury, and regress after this has been tackled.

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

The language is at times hard to follow, and I would recommend editing by an English speaking biomedical scientist.

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'