Reviewer’s report

Title: Work-related musculoskeletal disorders among Nigerian Physiotherapists.

Version: 1 Date: 6 November 2007

Reviewer: Alex Burdorf

Reviewer’s report:

General

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

1. The authors use the term work-related MSDs almost as synonym to MSDs. There are some very good current reviews available (e.g. Palmer et al Scand J Work Environ Health 2007;33:165-91) that demonstrate this is certainly not the case and it should be addressed that work only partly contributes to the occurrence of MSDs. This is important since the life-time prevalences cannot be interpreted as truly WRMSDs but rather MSDS of which a considerably part will be caused by work. The complexity of attributing for example low back pain to work can be found in Lötters et al. Scand J Work Environ Health 2003;29:431-40.

2. The text on table 3 strongly overlaps with the previous paragraph, one of these paragraphs should be deleted.

3. The onset of injury is very difficult to ascertain without substantial recall bias, it must be discussed whether this is of any value at all, it should also be considered to leave out this part completely.

4. The discussion should pay attention to the following aspects:
   - the risk factors are self-reported and hence rather an expression of beliefs than facts
   - the risk factors are across all MSDs, but certainly to some extent specific to particular MSDs

5. The discussion on differences in prevalences for ergonomic training are not very useful in a cross-sectional study where the direction of cause and effect are essentially unknown. This is severe overinterpretation.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

1. The authors use the term ‘rate’ throughout the manuscript incorrectly, for example “Bork et al indicated (...) had the lowest rate”, in a context where it is certainly not a rate but a prevalence measure. Also, the term response rate is
almost always incorrect (not a rate). Similarly, never use the word incidence for occurrence/prevalence.

2. The authors should mention information on the validity of the questionnaire, the well-known Nordic questionnaire was debated thoroughly by Descatha et al. Scand J Work Environ Health 2003;29:431-40.

3. Table 4 could be presented in one line in the text

4. the discussion on male/female ratio in the job is not very informative and rather lengthy. There is quite some literature on gender differences in MSDs, that should be taken into account here.

5. I am not sure whether the higher prevalence in Nigeria can be blamed on conditions, as the authors themselves express in their introduction also cultural aspects that could influence reporting aspects

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
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 limited interest

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'