Reviewer's report

Title: Carpal tunnel syndrome and the use of computer mouse and keyboard A systematic review

Version: 2 Date: 19 March 2008

Reviewer: Arianne Verhagen

Reviewer's report:

I am very pleased to see that this manuscript is majorly revised. Especially the fact that the manuscript is more in line with the QUORUM statement more details are described about the methods and results. Nevertheless this leads to other comments

General comments

1. I am still not happy with the word ‘causal’, now only in the description of the level of evidence synthesis. As I understand this is described in a formal document, but I like to stress that a causal relationship can only be determined from unbiased randomised clinical trials (or perhaps large unbiased prospective cohort studies). As the authors state in the discussion only methodological strong studies with enough power are able to provide reasonably valid results.

Specific comments

Method:

1. The search is performed until June 2005. I might have missed this information in the previous version of the manuscript, in that case my sincere apologies, but the search is rather old, and therefore I recommend updating the review.

2. A quality assessment is now described, but seems confusing to me. First of all this is a unique set of criteria used to assess strengths and limitations. Second, methodological and more content specific items are mixed. Third, very importantly, blinding as a methodological item, relevant to this kind of research and relevant to evaluate whether results are biased (valid) or not is missing. In my opinion using a preset list of items is easier to work with than this, even though the authors only aim to describe the limitations. I know that most of these scoring systems have no clear validity, but what is done now also lacks validity, I even find the face validity a bit disappointing.

3. I have some doubts with the item of the quality assessment: exposure assessment. Here the authors state that objective measures are better than self reported measures. Why? To be able to generate valid results the exposure assessment should be done with valid and reliable measurement. Often self reported measurements appear to be more valid and reliable than the so-called objective measurements.

Results:
4. Although the authors state that the result section is shortened it is still much too long. A lot of information in the text is also presented in the table. Please skip too much redundancy. In the text an overall summary, or just the most relevant findings have to be presented not every detail.

5. Still no results concerning the quality assessment or the evidence synthesis are presented. The authors state they placed the evidence synthesis in the discussion section, this is not the right place in my opinion, it is a result. As a reader I would like to know what level of evidence is found for instance for computer work and CTS. Now this section is almost four pages long and as a reader I have to draw my own conclusions from a detailed description of all studies found in this section. Please end this section with a kind of summary or conclusion based on the level of evidence. This than can be discussed in the discussion para.

Discussion:

6. Although the authors state they added a discussion about the strengths and limitations of their own research, I think this is rather sparse. The strengths and limitations of the studies included are discussed rather broadly, but not so the ones of their own study

**What next?:** Reject because scientifically unsound

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.