Reviewer's report

Title: Cutpoints for mild, moderate and severe pain in patients with osteoarthritis of the hip or knee ready for joint replacement surgery

Version: 1 Date: 9 January 2008

Reviewer: Karen Anderson

Reviewer's report:

The purpose of this study was to determine the optimal cutpoints for pain associated with osteoarthritis (OA) of the hip or knee and to validate the cutpoints. The subjects were over 300 patients awaiting joint replacement surgery who completed self-report questionnaires assessing pain, function, and quality of life. The authors found that pain severity cutpoints differed somewhat for patients with OA of the hip and knee. The study is well designed, and the interesting results add to the existing pain cutpoint literature.

The response rate (70%) for the mailed survey was good. The participants were somewhat younger than non-participants.

Minor Revisions:

The subjects were asked to complete the WOMAC in relation to the past 48 hours. Are these the standard directions for the WOMAC? As the Brief Pain Inventory assesses pain experienced in the past 24 hours, it would have been preferable to have the same time frame. Also, is there evidence of the validity of the Norwegian version of the WOMAC? Several studies were referenced, but a brief summary of the validity would be helpful.

The results of previous studies have suggested that subjects have a difficult time focusing on one painful area and its impact on function if they have multiple painful areas. The authors might want to mention this issue in the discussion.

Table 1 should probably indicate if there are any significant differences between the two patients groups in the variables listed.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.