Reviewer's report

Title: The relative timing of VMO and VL in the aetiology of anterior knee pain: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

Version: 3 Date: 13 February 2008

Reviewer: Rudolf W. Poolman

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions.

The manuscript has improved further. However, as stated before the authors should refrain from pooling data for the following reasons:

1) Large number of studies with insufficient data to use in meta-analysis
2) Substantial heterogeneity

The authors should just report their finding that studies suffer from heterogeneity and insufficient data [i.e. lacking SDs] and no conclusions can be drawn. The observed trend can be due to chance alone and may be potentially misleading. Although the authors are applauded to the fact that they discuss this in a far better way in the present manuscript, this remains the key limiting issue in this study. Therefor, they should refrain from pooling. The authors even clearly illustrate the limitation of pooling with the sensitivity analysis performed. This will not change the main conclusion of their study: heterogeneity makes inferences of limited value. The authors should describe the observed trend could be due to chance along and might as well be a false conclusion.

Kind regards,

Rudolf Poolman MD PhD

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: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.