Reviewer's report

Title: Musculoskeletal symptoms of the upper extremities and the neck: a cross-sectional study on prevalence and symptom-predicting factors at visual display terminal (VDT) workstations

Version: 2 Date: 28 April 2008

Reviewer: Julius Sim

Reviewer's report:

The authors have generally produced appropriate responses to earlier comments and suggestions. I would just make a few additional suggestions:

Minor essential revisions:

i. Page 6:

Points 3 to 5 are still not completely clear. I think what they are saying is that they identified those predictors in the category in question that were significant (i.e. the factors were 'restricted' to those that were significant), rather than referring to what would commonly be thought of as statistically 'adjusting' one variable for one or more others. If so, perhaps say something along the lines of: ‘Identification of those workplace factors/psychosocial factors/features of the workplace that were significantly associated with the presence of symptoms’. If, on the other hand, it is indeed a case of statistical adjustment, it needs to be made clear which variable was adjusted for (not ‘to’) which other variable(s).

ii. Page 6:

A variable cannot have a correlation with an outcome parameter, as a parameter does not refer to a variable as such, but to a particular statistical measure on a variable (in the population, rather than in the sample). Just say 'outcome variable'.

iii. Page 12:

In the sentence ‘The aim of this study…’, I suggest ‘predicting factors’ is changed to ‘predictors’, as the former may suggest a cause-effect relationship, whereas the latter is standard statistical terminology in cross-sectional studies, and does not necessarily imply a causal process.

iv. Tables:

The dashes in the confidence intervals have mainly been replaced with commas. A very minor point: one or two seem to have been overlooked in Table 3. Also, the space before the comma can be removed. In Table 5, these are ‘probability’ values not ‘significance’ values (notwithstanding the fact that SPSS uses this term in its output). Statistical significance is inferred from – but is not the same
thing as – the magnitude of the p value. I would just label the column with ‘p value’.

The manuscript still needs a little attention in relation to use of English, but the authors have stated that it is due to be reviewed by a native speaker.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests