Reviewer's report

Title: Toe spreading ability in men with chronic pelvic pain syndrome

Version: Date: 16 February 2005

Reviewer: Ahmed N Ghanem

Reviewer's report:

General

Reply on authors' response and revised article

After reading the authors’ response letter and revised article, nothing in the authors’ reply to the points mentioned under my article appraisal or the new version of their article require alteration of any of my views anticipated in my commentary essay sent to you previously.

I would still recommend that the article should be published on the condition that the enclosed full commentary essay is reported under its own title and to be made accessible with the article in order to inform the readers about reasons justifying my recommendation for acceptance.

In agreement with the authors, the two words they commented upon need replacement with better more accurate alternatives for expressing the intended meanings. The word ‘proved’ mention in paragraph 2 under article appraisal may better be replaced to read (The hypothesis has been proved (proposed or advanced)) by the authors based on demonstrable statistical significance that CPPS patients were less often able to spread all toes than men without CPPS (p=0.007), as for the remaining of the sentence, this was quoted from the results section of the article abstract.

The other word incorrectly used was matched subgroup in paragraph 4 under article appraisal of my commentary essay. This has been changed to compared subgroup. I intended to refer to the compared figures of controls and patients (22:3) shown on the last (right) shaded rectangle of (table 1) on which statistical significance was detected and the observational hypothesis was advanced by the authors, while the remaining 4 comparable subgroups in shaded diagonal rectangles in the same table do not show statistical significance.

As the authors have affirmed that there is no recognized statistical error, but my gut feeling tells there is something wrong, I wonder what the authorities on statistics have to say about it. I believe this a most serious statistical problem that needs to be widely and professionally addressed.

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

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

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Accept without revision

Level of interest: An exceptional article

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests