Reviewer's report

Title: The effectiveness of pelvic floor muscle training alone and with other physical therapies for the treatment of stress urinary incontinence in women: a systematic review

Version: 3  Date: 2 March 2006

Reviewer: Peter Herbison

Reviewer's report:

General

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

Many of the replies to my previous comments are of the nature people do it so why shouldn't we. This is not a good enough argument. I feel particularly strongly about quality scores. I think that the assessment of quality of studies is essential in systematic reviews, but adding up the elements of quality and assigning meaning to it is not appropriate. I realise that there are still many recomendation for quality scores around, but there is a general feeling now that these are inappropriate. For example, the section on quality in the Cochrane Handbook is currently being revamped completely and is looking at a new way of assessing quality and how it may affect the review.

I still find it very strange to read about a level II study or whatever. From the definition the authors provide as supplementary material, level II is defined as "Evidence obtained from at least one properly-designed randomised controlled trial". Thus it applies to the evidence, not the trial. It would be simpler and more correct to refer to the study as a properly designed RCT.

Thank you to the authors for pointing out that I hadn't read the inclusion/exclusion criteria clearly enough. I agree that the Glazener et al paper did not exclude women with mixed incontinence, and I am sure that a small proportion of the women would have had this.

I am concerned that the authors do not seem to know the literature about selective reporting of outcomes, a phenomenon that clearly occurs, but they are correct that there is no evidence one way or the other that this has happened in the studies in this review.


There is also good evidence that study counting can be misleading, although the apperance of this is hard to avoid in a narrative review.

I think the changes that have been made improved the paper.

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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?: 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: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests