Reviewer’s report

Title: The influence of a series of five dry cupping treatments on pain and mechanical thresholds in patients with chronic non-specific neck pain - a randomised controlled pilot study

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Reviewer: Cesar Fernandez-de-Las

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript covers an interesting topic but it needs so much work before it can be reconsidered for publication. Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. Abstract. the results section is extremely poorly written. Statistical values and difference scores are needed.

2. Introduction. Authors should revise their comments related to sensitization on chronic neck pain, as sensitization is not the same in chronic neck pain and WAD. A recent study Javanshir et al. JMPT 2010 covering sensitization in acute and chronic neck pain should be included. Authors should include an hypothesis for the study: which group would be expected to improve more?

2. Methods. Inclusion criteria and a better definition of neck pain is needed. Exclusion criteria should be combined into a paragraph. Authors should be caution with their comments as patients were allowed to receive a different physical therapy treatment during the study. This is a big bias. It should be better discussed in the discussion. I agree with the authors that blinding the assessor was difficult, but this is a big bias. Teh inclusion of a waiting list group also may be considered a bias as expectation is an important factor. In fact, table 1 shows that expectations with the treatment are different between groups. Some figures with the cupping treatment would be helpful for the readers. Authors should include the MCD for VAS. This is important for RCT. A main concern with the SF-36 is that this scale is not valid for ONE WEEK. Iam sorry, but the use of this questionaire for 1 weeks is not the common way to do. This questionaire refers to ONE MONTH. Authors should take care with the inclusion of TrP in the manuscript asd they did not assess TrPs.

3. Results. Some comments included in the sample characteristic paragraph should be avoided. Authors should rewrite this section including first the effects and later the changes. A better redaction of the results section should be done. Authors should provide F and P values of the ANVOCAAs. In addition, the within-group and between-group changes should be included in the tables. Last paragraph on mechanical sensory and pain thresholds should be completed. There is no information on statistical analysis. A relationship should denote the coefficient and the P value, but not the SD.

4. Discussion. Limitations and strenghts should be placed at the end of the discussion. authors should include some comments on changes in PPT
(hypoalgesic effects) and compare the results with other manual therapies which have also the ability to increase PPT. Discussion of clinical relevance and effect sizes is needed in a clinical RCT.

5. tables. Within-group and between-group changes of the groups should be included.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

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

**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