Author’s response to reviews

Title: Content Validity of Manual Spinal Palpatory Exams. A Systematic Review

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Point by point response to reviewers:

Reviewer: Klaus Linde
Discretionary revisions:
1) The reviewer raises a very good point. The authors believe that new ideas and definitions are introduced to the field in this article. A detailed and thorough discussion of the terms, concept and reasoning introduced, is paramount for the reader to understand the reasons behind the inclusion or exclusion of articles reviewed and for the design of future studies in this area.
2) References to each of the tables were added to the text.
3) I would have preferred a checklist of quality items to the quality score. Table 2 provides a detailed list of the quality items scored, and the overall score assigned to that category.
4) As a reader, I would be interested to know a bit more about the results in the other studies. What I really like is the detailed information on the excluded studies.
This systematic review focuses on content validity. A detailed discussion of the excluded studies is beyond the scope of this paper. Table 1 provides interested readers with a glimpse to each of the excluded studies and the reason they were not included in this review. A bibliography of these articles is added to the reference list.

Reviewer Charlotte Leboeuf-Yde

Compulsory revisions:
1. All studies reviewed but excluded were added to the reference list.
2. Agree with recommendation: changes were made to correct syntax.
3. We do not feel that the use of the word “assumption” reflects accurately the state of the literature. We have modified the sentence to align closely with the statement made by the International
federation of Manual Medicine about spinal manipulative procedures. The Scientific Committee of the International Federation of Manual Medicine has stated that beneficial outcomes and effectiveness of spinal manipulative procedures rely on appropriate and skilled treatment that is based on an accurate diagnosis, which in turn depends upon the accuracy of the palpatory procedures used.” A reference is provided to substantiate this statement.

4. The classification system we used is based partly on Winter, who suggested each researcher determines his own definitions of validity based on the type of study which is what we did...we determined that content validity, for us, was what van der Wurff et al. used to define validity in their article on the systematic review of sacroiliac joint tests (2000). Also, in McConsult online, an article by Gross AR et al. reviews validity studies and chose only the mechanical model and pain provocation ones, just like we did...in other words, both these articles defined validity (not using an adjective) as requiring reference standards, sensitivity and specificity (Gross AR, Aker PD and Quartly C. Manual Therapy in the treatment of neck pain. Rheumatic Diseases of North America. August 1996, 22(3). These were our models that we emulated because we liked their articles. We felt that the only way to determine that the test measured the phenomenon accurately was to compare its results with those obtained from a standardized, most accurate, hopefully a machine, measurement.

5. We agree strongly with the reviewer regarding the need for subjects to be blinded and naive to the tests being used. However in this review, based on the articles selected, this is not an issue for mechanical models, and as expected subjects in pain could not be naive.

6. We agree with the reviewer, the phrase needed further clarification. If disagreement persisted between two reviewers, two content experts would review the article. The experts would focus mainly on the areas of disagreement. The experts will extract the information and score the area(s) of contention by consensus. The final score would incorporate the consensus score.

7. The recommendation is well taken and changes were made.

8. The recommendation is well taken and changes were made.

9. The recommendation is well taken and changes were made.

10. The recommendation is well taken and changes are made to clarify that we are focusing on content validity.

11. Reference 27 (now 28) is a review. The sentence was changed to reflect accurately that we are referring to another review and not to other reviews.

12. The recommendation is well taken and changes were made.


14. The references were all changed and checked. They are downloaded from the databases directly to EndNote and entered as such into the article. The corrections requested have been incorporated in the new changes.

15. The recommendation is well taken and changes were made.

Discretionary revision:

P6, 3rd paragraph, last sentence: the example with arrow is correct as stated. The arrow may hit different points on the target area (and not the same point), without providing an accurate reading of the exact phenomenon being tested (which is only obtained by hitting the bulls-eye).