Reviewer’s report

Title: Exercise therapy for bone and muscle health - an overview of systematic reviews

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Reviewer: Krysia Dziedzic

Reviewer’s report:

1. This manuscript provides an overview and synthesis of the evidence for exercise therapy in improving pain and functioning in musculoskeletal conditions. This is a timely review and builds upon similar publications.

2. The strength of this type of overview is its clinical usefulness, reporting the best available evidence from published systematic reviews in one manuscript. The limitation of such overviews is the age of the original studies, as the most up to date evidence is excluded.

3. The objectives were clear but the inclusion of pathogenesis seemed a little odd in methodological terms as it didn’t fit with the methodology of intervention reviews.

4. The implications for further reviews and for clinical practice could be expanded.

Minor essential revisions

5. Background: The authors state that many musculoskeletal patients in primary care are referred to other healthcare professionals. Others show that this is in fact a small percentage in one year. Could this be referenced?

6. The search strategy, information on why systematic reviews were selected and a description of excluded reviews would be helpful.

7. The introduction of the check list for methodological quality should be in the methods and add an explanation for the quality cut-offs.

8. Expand the discussion of the methodological strengths and limitations of the overview.

9. The authors have chosen to exclude cost effectiveness studies. The limitations of this could be further discussed in light of the clinical findings.

10. What do the findings mean for practice and further research?

11. Tables: explain in text NR, SMD, WMD

Discretionary revisions

12. Could references be added to the second paragraph?

13. Refer to previous overviews and summaries in the background – it will highlight the need for this overview.

14. Expand the findings from the review of hand OA. This is an area with
conflicting evidence with a number of systematic reviews in the field.

15. The discussion introduces the non-linear relationship between symptoms and functioning. This was interesting and could be expanded with reference to other work.

16. How did the different Cochrane reviews compare? Was the size of overall effect clinically meaningful?

**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