Reviewer's report

Title: The effectiveness of a specific exercise program in addition to first-line care for acute low back pain: A randomised controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 15 October 2009

Reviewer: Teresa Liu-Ambrose

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. In sample size justification, authors need clarify when they expected the 1 unit difference in pain score and the 1.2 unit difference in global perceived effect scale. In turn, those should be the primary outcome measures (e.g. pain at 3 weeks).
2. Who actually randomized the participants?
3. Clarify in the introduction how this study is distinctively different than that conducted by Cherkin and coworkers. This was not clear when I read the manuscript.

- Minor Essential Revisions
1. Abstract: suggest in second last sentence reword “over the first week” to “over the first 7 days” as “over the first week” and “at 1 week” are potentially confusing.
2. Please clarify whether adverse events were monitored and if so, how, and the results.
3. Please clarify why adherence data were available for only a subset of the study participants.

- Discretionary Revisions
1. Suggest use of subtitles to improve clarity. For example, under outcomes, use subtitles such as: primary outcome measures, secondary outcomes measures, and adherence.

Which journal?: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of importance in its field

What next?: Accept for publication in BMC Medicine after minor essential revisions

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.