Reviewer's report

Title: Assessment of the quality and variability of health information on chronic pain websites using the DISCERN instrument

Version: 1 Date: 25 July 2010

Reviewer: Yasser Khazaal

Reviewer's report:

Manuscript

Assessment of the quality and variability of health information on chronic pain websites using the DISCERN instrument

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The manuscript addresses a relevant and actual issue.

Major compulsory revisions:

• Abstract: 1) Something is disappointing between the results section of the abstract reporting not statistically significant results and the conclusion of the abstract section: “Websites that scored high using the DISCERN questionnaire contained health related seals approval and provided commercial solutions...” 2) There is no information in the results section of the abstract on links between interactive multimedia and readability levels. A comment was however made in the conclusion.

• Discussion: 1) Page 12: “The search engine with the highest average DISCERN ...was Yahoo...” Where is the statistical analyse related to this conclusion? 2) Page 12: “The high coefficient beta values....may achieve higher DISCERN scores”, page 13: “This investigation found health related seals of approval...low grade level readability scores”. Several of the results reported Table 3 and 4 were not statistically significant as acknowledged by the authors in the results section of the abstract. I suggest to the authors to check carefully the discussion.

Minor essential revisions:

• Abstract: 1) In the results section of the abstract, authors say “The multivariate regressions demonstrated that potential for commercial gain where coefficient=5.5 with 95% confidence interval (-2.7, 13.8), p=0.189 is a greater contributing factor in higher DISCERN scores...., although both were not statistically significant”. I think that there is no need to give these statistical details in the abstract section (coefficient, confidence interval...). It is however important to stated about the statistically significant or non significant results.

• Data abstraction: Page 8, “websites seals of approval”. It would be nice to add some examples. “...and multimedia”. It would be also nice to add some examples.
• One of the exclusion criteria is “For profit websites only if there only intention was to sell a product…” How many websites were excluded in relation to this criterion? How does the distinction between the excluded sites and “websites that had a potential for commercial gain” was made?

• Page 11, “Factors associated with variability in DISCERN and Readability scores”: The statistical results were clearly reported in Tables 3 and 4. I think that there is no need to give also the details in text. It is however important to explain statistically significant and non-significant results. It may help the reader.

Discretionary revisions:

• Page 4, “Over one billion users” in the world?
• Page 5, “rather than actual absenteeism”…I suggest to delete “actual”.

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

**What next?**: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Quality of written English**: Acceptable

**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