Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 3 August 2010

Reviewer: Stephan Schug

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1) The last sentence of the Results section of the abstract summarizes two findings as important results which are not statistically significant. The Conclusions summarize findings which were significant and would be better suited for presentation in the abstract.

2) Throughout the Discussion rather minor differences in scores with possibly not even statistical significant differences, but even less likely 'clinical' significance are discussed as if they are relevant. For example, the Yahoo search engine found sites with a DISCERN score of 60, which cannot be of relevant difference to sites found by Google with a DISCERN score of 58.2; a difference of 1.8 on a scale of 80 cannot be of any relevance. Nevertheless, this is discussed as if Yahoo finds sites which are different from those found by Google. Similar discussions are made re readability!

Minor Essential Revisions
1) In the last sentence of the Results section of the abstract the grammar and wording is poor - I guess the authors want to say: "The multivariable regressions demonstrated that potential for commercial gain with coefficient = 5.5 ... is a contributing factor to higher DISCERN scores....."

2) First sentence of second paragraph of discussion needs to read "The mean DISCERN score for the 161 unique websites was 55.9 of a maximum of 80...."

Discretionary Revisions

Which journal?: Not appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article whose findings are important to those with closely related interests and more suited to BMC Anesthesiology

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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