Reviewer’s report

Title: Social Acceptability of Treatments for Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis: a cross-sectional study.

Version: Date: 23 May 2006

Reviewer: Joseph O'Brien

Reviewer’s report:

General

The authors seek to determine “social acceptability” of both school screening and treatment of adolescent idiopathic scoliosis by surveying an informed group of non-patient parents responding from 10 schools in Northern Italy. “Patient Choice” is a critical issue especially for conditions such as scoliosis, which as the authors point out lacks sufficient definitive knowledge and evidence to confidently guide patients in the various healthcare alternatives they must consider for their scoliotic child. In our communication with patients, deciding what to do is often more burdensome than the actual treatment. While the authors do not directly address “patient choice”, they do introduce the concept of “social acceptability”. This is an intriguing and important concept and this study should generate further research, discussion and direction for scientists, clinicians, and policy makers regarding the early detection and treatment of adolescent idiopathic scoliosis.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Methods:

The authors indicate that the PG and SG made informed decisions in their survey response yet there is no description of the methodology used to educate these groups on the “decision making tools”. Assessing the objectivity, consistency, and quality of this education process is essential to evaluating the results reported and therefore requires further elucidation.

Results:

The authors report that 84% of the respondents considered the survey to be complex. This finding is considered to possibly explain a low (34%) response rate by the Study Group. While this may or may not be true, there is need for further clarification on why it was considered to be complex and discussion regarding the possible impact on the results reported.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Intro: Page 3 Paragraph 1- last line: Add the word “it” between if and can.

Page 3 Paragraph 2- 5th line: Remove the word “of” between question and the.

References: recheck spelling ie,

Ref # 25- “Patient”
Ref # 26 “acceptability and psychiatric”

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.