Reviewer's report

Title: Validity of the Walter Reed Visual Assessment Scale to measure subjective perception of spine deformity in patients with idiopathic scoliosis. A preliminary analysis

Version: 1 Date: 19 September 2006

Reviewer: Axel Maier-Hennes

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting paper reporting important aspects regarding the self-perception or self-estimation of patients suffering from scoliosis. It may influence future guidelines for conservative or even operative treatment and therefore it deserves being published.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. To be able to draw clear conclusions about the estimation of the cosmetical effects of scoliosis it seems essential to distinguish between adolescents and adults.
2. The influence of different curve pattern on the estimation of the cosmetical impact is missing and I’d wish urgently this point to be addressed. The correlation of the results of this questionnaire with the Cobb angle are not very high and the different cosmetical impact of different curve pattern may be a reason for this!
3. The SRS-22 questionnaire, which has been used for a correlation, seems not appropriate for adolescents and additionally has a large ceiling effect not allowing a strict conclusion. Therefore the patient group should have been matched to adolescents and adults.
At least it should be discussed in this article that a correlation of this questionnaire with an appropriate "well-being" questionnaire would be helpful (eg. Berner Fragebogen zum Wohlbefinden Jugendlicher BFW).

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
An interesting question to be answered would be how the results of this questionnaire changes with treatment (SRS-22 asks for treatment satisfaction).

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: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.