Reviewer's report

Title: Unknotting night-time muscle cramp: a survey of patient experience, help-seeking behaviour and perceived treatment effectiveness

Version: 1 Date: 5 December 2011

Reviewer: Kevin Miller

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Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. The abstract section’s conclusions are not supported by the data (p 3). This study did not examine the incidence of cramping (as indicated by the first sentence stating that nocturnal cramping is common). Please address the primary observations of your study and make appropriate conclusions.

2. Were the subjects also excluded based on other factors which may have affected their perception of cramp (e.g., current medications or treatments being used)? For example, someone may have reported cramps not being that bad but that perception is only because of the medications their taking.

3. More information needs to be provided regarding the grouping of data. This information is necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of the statistical testing (p 6-7). For example, how were the data grouped for when cramps occurred? It seems that middle of sleeping time and irregularly were options but were they the only options? Same question for whether soreness was experienced following cramp.

4. How many subjects were <64 y and >65 y? Please provide “n” for each group where appropriate in the Results section (p 7). Why did the researchers use age 65 as the cutoff for their groups? I wouldn’t necessary consider 64 y old subjects “younger.”

5. The confidence intervals reported in the Results section (p 7) for perceived pain are odd to me since negative values are reported. If the VAS scale was between 0 and 100, negative values could not be possible. Moreover, are the CI’s reported correct? Many of the CI’s do not encompass the mean.

6. Much of the data presented in the Results section is absent in the discussion section (e.g., pain of cramp, location of cramp, duration of cramp, soreness following cramp). As a result, the authors do not discuss their primary question of the experience of night time cramp or discuss the implications of those experiences. The discussion needs to be strengthened before this manuscript can be published.

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. Other authors report higher nocturnal cramping rates. I direct the authors to Oboler SK, Prochazka AV, Meyer TJ. Leg symptoms in outpatient veterans. West J Med. 1991; 155: 256-259. The authors may wish to work these data into their
2. Remove “muscle cramp” from the list of key words as these words appear in the title of the paper.

3. List some of the “many interventions available for preventing night-time-calf cramps” to give the reader an example (p 4, para 1).

4. Please put the data used in the calculation of percentages following percentages (p 7 and others).

5. Please change the “N” to “n” to reflect your study took a sample of people with night time cramps (p 8). Also, for consistency report the percentages for the numbers at the end of p 8 and beginning of p 9.

Discretionary Revisions:
1. Change “Backside” to “buttocks” in Table 1.
2. Perhaps condense the single responses (e.g., Bowen therapist) in Table 2 to “other.”
3. Perhaps condense the Results section since some data reported in text are redundant with the Tables.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests