Reviewer's report

Title: Effectiveness of physiotherapy exercise following total knee replacement: systematic review and meta-analysis

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Reviewer: Giorgio Ferriero

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I've read the paper with sincere interest since it is an update of an important previous paper on the efficacy of physiotherapy in patients after total knee arthroplasty.

If from a technical point of view the paper seems perfect, according to me some clarifications must be made because the two messages reported as conclusion are quite strong.

So, I would start from the end: "After total knee replacement, interventions including physiotherapy and exercise [1] show evidence of short-term effectiveness for benefit to physical function. However, [2] no long-term benefits of physiotherapy or exercise intervention were identified in this review."

The conclusion #1 seems to be evident to everyone working in a rehabilitation setting. On the other hand, conclusion #2 is not clear; it seems that a person after TKA has improvement only in the first months, while after 1 year results are similar to those who did not undergone to any rehabilitation program.

This result seems to be explained by the interpretation of what physiotherapy means. For example, "multidisciplinary rehabilitation" has been considered as "physiotherapy", while "standard amount of physiotherapy" is described as "no intervention" (see Kauppila 2010 and 2011). Please, verify if the controls of the papers included in the "no intervention group" really did not underwent to any rehabilitation protocol or describe what do you mean for minimal intervention.

Again, it is not clear how many rehabilitative sessions patients did and how far were from the 1 year follow up. Really aren't there any improvements in pain, function or ROM?

Similarly, many rehabilitative approaches have been considered together as homogenous. How can you compare their (different) benefits in a meta-analysis?

In this review is not clear if comorbidities should be considered in the rehabilitative program, if age is an important factor to decide the best treatment, if BMI should be taken as a variable able to modify the setting.

I would suggest the authors to be prudent when in few sentences are describing the results of their study

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.

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