Reviewer’s report

Title: Comorbidities, characteristics and implications in local, regional, and widespread pain - a descriptive population-based survey

Version: 1 Date: 30 January 2015

Reviewer: Alessandro Chiarotto

Reviewer’s report:

I was pleased to have the opportunity to review this manuscript again. The major pitfall of the previous version of the manuscript resided in a poor reporting of several aspects of the methods and in an inappropriate use of terminology. I appreciate the authors’ effort to review their manuscript following mine and other reviewers’ indications. If compared to the previous version of this work, structure and reporting have substantially improved, but there is still some room for improvement.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

My previous main criticism related to the fact that it was not clear to which ‘types’ of pain the authors aimed at referring to. The authors added a note on that on the methods section (lines 214-216). I believe this is not sufficient and the authors should report more information on this crucial point of the manuscript. For example, when they state that ‘most were probably musculoskeletal’ (lines 214-15), they should provide more references on this important statement. Overall, the fact that they focus on all types of pain should be clear in more and other parts of the manuscript: abstract, introduction and discussion. Moreover, it should be added as a limitation of the study the fact that, not focusing on one or more specific types of pain, this generic- and population-approach on pain provide little information to researchers and clinicians interested to gain more insight from this study regarding characteristics and comorbidities of the type of pain of their interest. In fact, it is not clear how this manuscript could give valuable information to target effective pain treatments, considering the very broad approach.

Introduction and Discussion. Results of other studies are presented for specific pain populations and these are used to discuss the results of the current work. However, comparisons should not be made easily, without taking into account the different pain populations included in the different studies. I encourage the authors to review the meaningfulness of all these comparisons, and to add comments and notes in the discussion regarding substantial differences of the pain populations of other studies to which they compare theirs, when present.

The authors mentioned that several instruments were included in the second questionnaire, however, it is not necessary to report this information (lines 190-192) if they did not report results for these instruments assessing various
constructs. The same goes for the abstract where they mention these instruments. These parts should probably be deleted.

Methods and Results. Missing data. A specific statement on how missing data were handled should be specified in the methods section, together with the rationale for presenting complete case analysis. Moreover, it should be mentioned whether there were any clear discrepancies in characteristics of subjects with missing data, compared to the remaining pain population.

Moreover, it is not clear how many subjects did not mark on the manikin in the second questionnaire. This information is not reported and, if no data were missing, this should be specified. When reporting the number of missing data on each questionnaire, please add the percentage in respect to the total number of respondents with pain.

Results. Lines 300-303. Besides mean age compared between pain and no-pain group, present also other socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. sex, marital status).

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

Abstract. Abbreviations for local, regional and widespread pain should be checked throughout the abstract. They are not specified the first time they are used.

Results. Line 310, substitute “in all” with “in total”.

Discussion. Lines 374-393. Present this part as a whole paragraph and not as a list of sentences.

Figure 1. Its layout should be improved. The location of the line representing that 9 weeks is not very clear.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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.