Reviewer’s report

Title: Craniosacral Therapy for chronic pain: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials

Version: 0 Date: 02 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

<div class="expandable-children">PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?
Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?
Yes - the approach is appropriate

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?
Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

STATISTICS - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?
Yes - appropriate statistical analyses have been used in the study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?
Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?
Yes - current version is technically sound

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: This was a well-executed systematic review and meta-analysis. Authors describe their procedures very well. It is a little thin to say that only one of the authors assessed bias risk while other authors also authored some of the studies included, but this was mentioned in the Limitations section - I applaud authors' honesty.
It may be a step too far to suggest this manuscript include other osteopathic publications which also show benefit from cranial osteopathy; there are some by non-physician osteopaths as well as U.S. DO physicians. As a writer and reviewer of cranial concept manuscripts myself and a former staff physician at the Upledger Institute (knew John Upledger very well), I am comfortable in integrating all relevant cranial concept research - "A rising tide floats all boats."

* What are the major findings of the manuscript?
This systematic review is the most comprehensive of its kind that I have seen. Also, this is the strongest meta-analysis showing benefit of CST; that CST is shown to be beneficial is a big deal.

* What unusual or novel methods or findings does this paper address, if any?
I am not a biostatistician, so can't say if this review/analysis is unique or not; it seemed that they defined their search and evaluation process honestly and they acknowledge that 3 of the 4 "evaluators" also were authors of reviewed articles. Could be a problem with some readers.

* How does this work contribute to the field?
Creates greater credibility for CST, which is a major advancement, and may motivate future research funding opportunity.

* How could other researchers use the information presented in this paper in their own work?
Researchers may set a standard for procedures used in systematic review and meta-analysis.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:
I have no recommendations for revisions.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an
organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

This reviewer has been recruited by a partner organization, Research Square. Reviewers with declared or apparent competing interests are not utilized for these reviews. This reviewer has agreed to publication of their comments online under a Creative Commons Attribution License attributed to Research Square and was paid a small honorarium for completing the review within a specified timeframe. Honoraria for reviews such as this are paid regardless of the reviewer recommendation.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal