Reviewer’s report

Title: Reliability of diagnosis and clinical efficacy of visceral osteopathy: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 01 Dec 2017

Reviewer: Gary Fryer

Reviewer’s report:

Congratulations to the authors for a review of a topic that requires critical review. The review paper is appropriate to the journal and should be of interest to the readership. It is a well conducted systematic review and generally well written. However, the formatting of the manuscript was problematic and made the manuscript difficult to read. It appears that the paper was in tracked changes mode (with formatting edits) when converted to PDF and also has a redundant set of line numbers. I have used the set of numbers closest to the text to identify the line in the comments below. This formatting issue will be easily resolved.

My key criticism of the paper is the inclusion of Chapman's reflexes. These 'reflex' points are not related to the concept of visceral osteopathy or the detection of palpable visceral dysfunction (mobility & motility). They have a different origin (Chapman, USA) from visceral technique, are not usually seen as related by osteopaths or osteopathic texts, so I don't believe they should be included in a review on visceral osteopathy.

I have made a small number of comments and minor suggestions that the authors might consider in a revision of the paper.

ABSTRACT

* I suggest removing the words 'thus' (P2L6) and 'statistical' (P2L22) because they are redundant.

* P3L1 - control group, rather than controlling group

METHODS

* P5L19 - should you have searched the databases EMBASE or CINAHL? This would have picked up IJOM articles (among others) and not required to search the individual journal.

* P6L46 - I don't think it is appropriate to include Chapman's reflexes.

* P8L1 - 'Regarding reliability studies …' reads better than 'As regards reliability studies …'
* P8L8-14 - Where does this interpretation of bias in the reliability studies come from? Is it reference 14? It should be referenced.
* P8L20 - reword to These precautions were deemed to be required.
* P8L24 & P9L2 - 'adapted' is the wrong word. ICC is 'appropriate' for rating reliability…
* P9L10 - Please cite reference for interpretation of bias in a single study. There appears to be some different interpretations of the RoB for individual studies (e.g., Furlan 2009 & CBRG, who state 6 LB domains for low bias).

RESULTS
* P13L16 - 'Of these, 8 met…' rather than 'Among them, 8 met…'
* P13L17 - 'In the complementary approach 4 additional articles' is unclear. What is the complementary approach? Search of the reference lists from retrieved articles?

DISCUSSION
* P21L10 - Did the authors try contacting the study authors for missing details? From the limitation stated it appears they did not. Why was this? Contacting authors for missing information is recommended by the Cochrane Handbook.
* P22L22 - nowadays is too colloquial; replace with 'currently'
* P22L22 - 'no evidence for the reliability specific efficacy' appears to have a word missing. Replace with 'no evidence for the reliability or efficacy’?
* The paper needs a clear Conclusion section with heading

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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.

I declare that I have no competing interests

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