Reviewer’s report

Title: Manual Therapy Versus Therapeutic Exercise in non-specific chronic neck pain: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial.

Version: 0 Date: 14 May 2019

Reviewer: Enoch Ho

Reviewer’s report:

In the background session, the rationale of having PS associated with a chronic neck condition needs to have further discussion. The authors made the rationale based on one single source and lacking of a comprehensive literature review discussion.

The way the authors define chronic neck pain will create significant bias as this is not a homologous group with all kinds of neck conditions included. May need to have a second look to better describe and select the samples (say, Xray or MRI reports, EMG results and etc). Also how much the difference of the chronic neck pain patients selected from the norm of PS and will age be a factor need to have some further discussion.

The methodology appears to be vigorous and the use of statistical tests seems accurate. Although the sample size calculation showed a total of 66 subjects needed. After dividing the group into three arms with each group at 20 subjects in, the number of subjects in each arm becomes a much lower number (20) and just meet the possible lowest sample size needed for a t-test. The small sample size in each arm will create significant problem in making any convincing conclusion especially, the heterogeneous nature of the sample. There is no more possibility to further stratify the sample say, by age or by differences from the norm of PS. The use of fake laser therapy might not be the best control as there will be some perceived treatment/attention effects and the control group might have shown some improvement too.

Lastly, there is a need to review the language as there are some grammar problems throughout the manuscript. My English is not good neithr but I can pick up some grammar problems.

Level of interest
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