Reviewer’s report

Title: The effect of adding TENS to stretch on improvement of ankle range of motion in inactive patients in intensive care units: A pilot trial

Version: 2 Date: 30 Jun 2019

Reviewer: Dale Edgar

Reviewer's report:

Manuscript Number: SSMR-D-19-00017R2

Title: Double-blind randomized clinical trial to investigate the efficacy of adding TENS to stretch for the improvement of ankle range of motion in inactive patients in intensive care units

Thank you to the authors for improving the manuscript again. However, the rather combative responses are disrespectful and the authors must consider whether they want to publish this manuscript or prefer to submit elsewhere. If they wish to continue with this review process, it requires further adjustments before this reviewer will recommend it for publication.

Specific points to address:

Title

1. The sample size calculation has not been completed using the primary outcome measure. Please therefore, include the word 'pilot' as a descriptor in the title. Either the study is a 'Double-blind, pilot randomised clinical trial' or change to:…in intensive care units: A pilot trial.'

Methods

2. By the author's admissions, there were differences between the baseline primary measures between groups suggesting a failure of randomisation or a systematic difference between the groups. At what time after admission to ICU did the trial start? Please list as a limitation if patients had differing trial starting points as it is feasible that any patient who had a prolonged stay prior to recruitment may have had a measurable limitation of ROM before treatment started and therefore, the intervention group, who started with more stiffness, may have responded more readily to the stretching intervention than the control group.
Results

3. Line 10 - The comments about the patient use of medication add little value. Please remove them. They restate the values in the table and create more questions than they answer.

Discussion

4. There are a number of statements which encourage the reader to believe that TENS in the context of the study is linked to long term benefits in terms of balance, strength or pain and short term benefits for spasm. Please temper the statements in paragraph 2 and the last two paragraphs prior to limitations (last paragraph).

Conclusion

5. Remove the last sentence. It is not in line with the outcomes assessed during the study. Neither cost, nor need for surgery were variables in this study.

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

No

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.

No

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

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