Reviewer’s report

Title: A systematic review protocol to evaluate the psychometric properties of functional assessments used with adults who have upper limb spasticity.

Version: Date: 10 February 2015

Reviewer: Andrzej Szopa

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions.

The Authors conducted a systematic review protocol of the psychometric properties of instruments used to measure upper limb functional outcomes (activity performance and participation) in patients with spasticity. It is an interesting and practical protocol, to be successfully used in the science and practice of rehabilitation. Prior to final decision several issues have to be addressed.

1. Background section for the Review is too long and difficult for reading. Background should be more focused on discussed subject and need to be reformulated.

2. Objectives of the Review. The aims of this systematic review protocol were confusing. The research question posed by the authors should be easily identifiable and understood. I seem to understand that the aim of this systematic review is to classify the functional outcome measures reported by Ashford and Turner-Stokes and to systematically locate the existing evidence of the properties of those outcome measures to conclude the best measure available for the particular purpose of measuring activity and/or participation outcomes following upper limb spasticity rehabilitation, however it should be more clearly defined and explained to the readers of your protocol. Please consider including a separate section for Objectives of the Review.

Minor Essential Revisions.

Methods. Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies in the review were not well defined. Are these inclusion criteria: “settings and participants; types of methods; types of outcomes; search methods for the identification of studies” - and if positive how they relate to

“Screening : Inclusion criteria for articles as described below:

1. The aim of the study should be to develop or evaluate the measurement properties of a measurement instrument identified in the review published by 193 Ashford and Turner-Stokes [1];

2. The instrument should aim to measure activity performance or participation, as defined by the ICF . Activity performance is defined as “the execution of a task or action by an individual” or require assistance from or be completed by a carer for the individual.
Participation is defined as “involvement in a life situation”.

3. The instrument is evaluated in patients with spasticity (as defined by the authors 201 of the included studies) or patients before or after botulinum toxin injection.

I would suggest to unify all the used criteria to make them more comprehensible. Have you considered any exclusion criteria of studies?

The methods is appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to allow others to replicate the work. The methods section of a research review is well presented and sufficient addressing several presented hypothesis.

The statistical analyses do not require to be assessed by an additional reviewer with statistical expertise.

In general I think this systematic review protocol can add new interesting information to the literature, but there are a number of minor essential revisions that need to be addressed before the final decision.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests