Author’s response to reviews

Title: Reliability of measurements of the fractured clavicle. A systematic review.

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Version: 1 Date: 17 Oct 2017

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear professor Shelleke,

We would like to submit our revised manuscript entitled “Reliability of measurements of the fractured clavicle. A systematic review” (SYSR-D-17-00027).

We have addressed the editor’s and reviewers’ comments. We believe that our manuscript has improved and hope that it is now acceptable for publication in BMC Systematic Reviews.

The authors state that the work is original and has not been submitted elsewhere. All authors played a significant part in the preparation of the manuscript. The corresponding author takes full responsibility for the submission.

On behalf of all authors,

Paul Hoogervorst, MD
The answers to the reviewers’ comments start and end with an * and can be found below after each separate remark (point-by-point). Changes within the text of the revised manuscript have been shown by underlining the revisions. Page and line numbers refer to the revised manuscript.

We hope that we addressed the raised concerns properly and that the revised manuscript will now be suitable for publication.

Reviewer #1: Good literature review to bring out existing gap in Knowledge.

And highlighting the need to study a subject further with better trials to help managing clavicle fractures in an objective and scientific manner.

* Thank you for your feedback.*

Reviewer #2: Well written manuscript on the variability within the literature on measurement of clavicle shortening and displacement. My fundamental critique is that this is presented as a very objective systematic review but ultimately is a very subjective selection of articles by a small subset of doctors.

*Thank you for your valuable feedback.

To address your comment on “ultimately is a very subjective selection of articles by a small subset of doctors”: Great care has been taken to do this systematic review in a reproducible and transparent manner. We are confident that different, or more reviewers/doctors, selecting papers for this systematic review when adhering to our protocol would have come up with the same included articles and conclusion as we do now. Therefore, we do not agree on the comment of “very subjective selection of articles by a small subset of doctors.”*

I am not disagreeing with the conclusion, only the methodology but I am not sure how to make it more objective. My recommendation would be to think about it as two articles, one that looks at the literature as objectively as possible and the other that looks at it more realistically/practically. For instance, the two articles that are mentioned but not ’included’ also seem valuable but are nearly excluded by their failing to meet the COSMIN / prisma standards as determined by the authors. Perhaps give more discussion to the relative benefit of these and similar.
*We completely agree with your comments on the matter of presenting the two papers that did not meet the inclusion criteria in Table 2. We should not have done that. We have removed these papers from table 2. Also, we removed the sentence describing these papers in line # 127.

However, since these papers may be of interest from a pragmatic perspective we do discuss these studies in the discussion section. This can be found in lines #225-238 of the manuscript.

In addition, under “limitations” we comment that our inclusion criteria may have been chosen too strict. However, that including these papers in our systematic review would not have influenced the final conclusion pertaining the lack of evidence on the subject. This can be found in lines #254-257 of the manuscript.*

Editor in Chief comments:

*Thank you for your valuable feedback.*

Please consider the comments of reviewer 2. I do not advocate splitting this manuscript up into two papers. I do recommend a response regarding the "two articles that are 'mentioned' but not included" and also the potential limitation of the "very subjective selection of articles by a small subset of doctors."

*We agree not to split the manuscript into two papers. Our responses to the feedback of reviewer 2 are described above.

Can the authors also please complete a PRISMA checklist and comment on some of the items on this, for example was a protocol developed for this review and was it registered?

*We updated the PRISMA checklist and uploaded it with the resubmission. A protocol was developed for this review with evaluation points after each step; however, it was not registered. We attached the Review Protocol as appendix 2 and the completed PRISMA checklist as appendix 3.*