

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Rotator cuff unloading versus loading exercise program in the conservative treatment of patients with rotator cuff tear: Protocol of a randomized controlled trial
AUTHORS	Ribeiro, Larissa; Cools, Ann; Camargo, Paula

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Rudolf Raschhofer Kepler University Hospital, Austria
REVIEW RETURNED	17-Jul-2020

GENERAL COMMENTS	Interesting question with importance for shoulder Rehabilitation. The authors should describe more clearly the course of progression (eg change of loading, change of exercise type, repetitions) of the two exercise programmes.
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REVIEWER	Kazutomo Miura Dept. of Rehabilitation Medicine, Hirosaki University, School of Medicine, Hirosaki, Japan.
REVIEW RETURNED	24-Aug-2020

GENERAL COMMENTS	I would ask the authors what the hypothesis under this study is, i.e., which exercise with or without loading on rotator cuff would be effective for the patients with rotator cuff tear. Furthermore, do the authors have a rationale to recommend one of two different exercises for the patients.
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REVIEWER	Neal L Millar University of Glasgow Scotland UK
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Sep-2020

GENERAL COMMENTS	Overall a well presented manuscript with all the core features. Importantly excellent and clear power calculations. One section which lacks is better presentation of the
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Reviewer Name: Rudolf Raschhofer

Institution and Country: Kepler University Hospital, Austria

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': None declared

Please leave your comments for the authors below

Interesting question with importance for shoulder Rehabilitation. The authors should describe more clearly the course of progression (eg change of loading, change of exercise type, repetitions) of the two exercise programmes.

Response: This information is now added in the appendix (page 1 and page 14). We hope it is clear now.

Reviewer: 2

Reviewer Name: Kazutomo Miura

Institution and Country: Dept. of Rehabilitation Medicine, Hirosaki University, School of Medicine, Hirosaki, Japan.

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': None declared

Please leave your comments for the authors below

I would ask the authors what the hypothesis under this study is, i.e., which exercise with or without loading on rotator cuff would be effective for the patients with rotator cuff tear. Furthermore, do the authors have a rationale to recommend one of two different exercises for the patients.

Response: It is difficult to formulate a hypothesis due to the current gap in literature. Both exercise types are combined in most existing treatment programs, but they haven't been compared to each other. However, we believe that the rotator cuff unloading exercise program will lead to better outcomes in the follow-up as regeneration of the rotator cuff is very unlikely in degenerative rotator cuff tears. This information is now added on pages 3-4 (lines 86-88).

Reviewer: 3

Reviewer Name: Neal L Millar

Institution and Country: University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': None declared

Please leave your comments for the authors below

Overall a well presented manuscript with all the core features. Importantly excellent and clear power calculations.

One section which lacks is better presentation of the

Response: This sentence is incomplete. We will be happy to provide what the reviewer asks.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Rudolf Raschhofer Kepler University Hospital, Austria
REVIEW RETURNED	17-Nov-2020
GENERAL COMMENTS	Thank you for adding the requested information. Congratulations on your manuscript.
REVIEWER	Neal L Millar University of Glasgow
REVIEW RETURNED	08-Nov-2020

GENERAL COMMENTS	All points have been addressed and this reviewer commends the authors on this proctor and looks forward to the results in due course.
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