

POSTER PRESENTATION

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Completeness of outcome description in studies for low back pain rehabilitation interventions: a survey of trials included in Cochrane reviews

Greta Castellini^{1*}, Silvia Gianola^{2,3}, Pamela Frigerio⁴, Michela Agostini⁵, Rosa Bolotta⁶, Davide Corbetta⁷, Monica Gasparini⁸, Paolo Gozzer⁹, Erica Guariento¹⁰, Linda Li^{11,12}, Valentina Pecoraro², Valeria Sirtori⁷, Andrea Turolla⁵, Lorenzo Moja^{2,13}

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Background

Selection of appropriate outcome measures is crucial in clinical trials in order to minimize bias and allow for precise comparisons of effects between interventions [1-3].

Objective

We aimed to assess the frequency and completeness of outcome measures in randomized controlled trials (RCTs) included in Cochrane systematic reviews (SRs), focusing on evaluations of the efficacy and safety of rehabilitation interventions for mechanical LBP.

Materials and methods

We performed a cross-sectional study of all RCTs included in all Cochrane SRs (full-text) published on The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews in February 2013. Two authors independently evaluated the type and frequency of each outcome measure reported in the full-text of RCTs, the methods used to measure outcomes, and the proportion of outcomes fully replicable based on the reported information (Figure 1).

Results

Our literature search identified 11 Cochrane SRs, including 185 RCTs. Across all RCTs, thirty-six different outcomes were investigated. The outcomes most commonly reported were pain (165/185; 89,2%, 95% Confidence Interval (CI) 84.7% – 93.7 %), disability (118/185; 63,8%, 95% CI 56.9% – 70.7 %), range of motion (72/185; 38.9%

95% CI 31.9% – 45.9%), and quality of life (45/185; 24,3%, 95% CI 18.1% – 30.5%) measured respectively by 70, 43, 41, 19 different measurement instruments (Figure 2). The procedure of blinding assessment was reported in 49.7% of the RCTs for pain (n= 82 RCTs) and 45% of RCTs for disability (n=53 RCTs). Pain, disability, range of motion, and quality of life outcomes were reported as fully replicable in 10.3% (n= 17 RCTs), 10.1% (n= 12 RCTs), 5.5% (n= 4 RCTs), and 6.6% (n= 3 RCTs) of the RCTs, respectively (Figure 3).

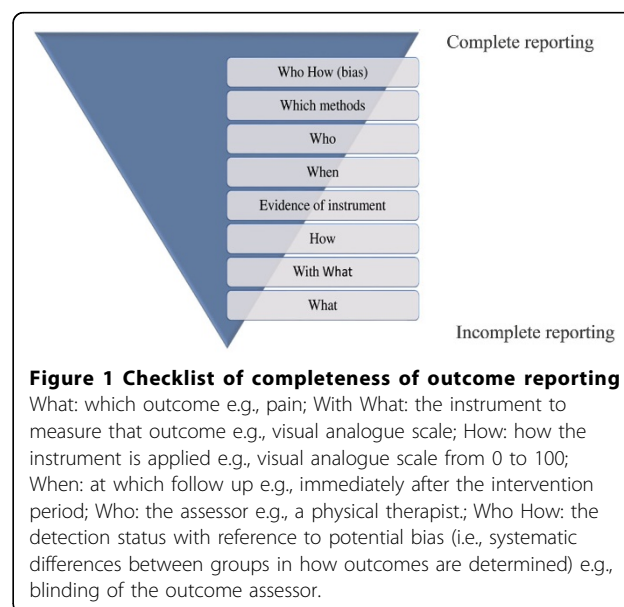


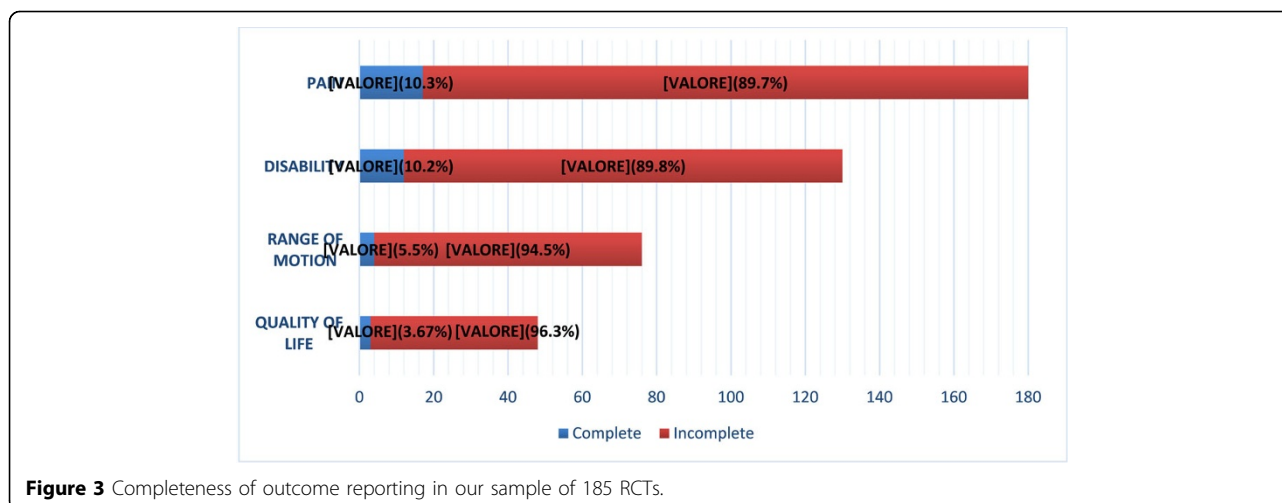
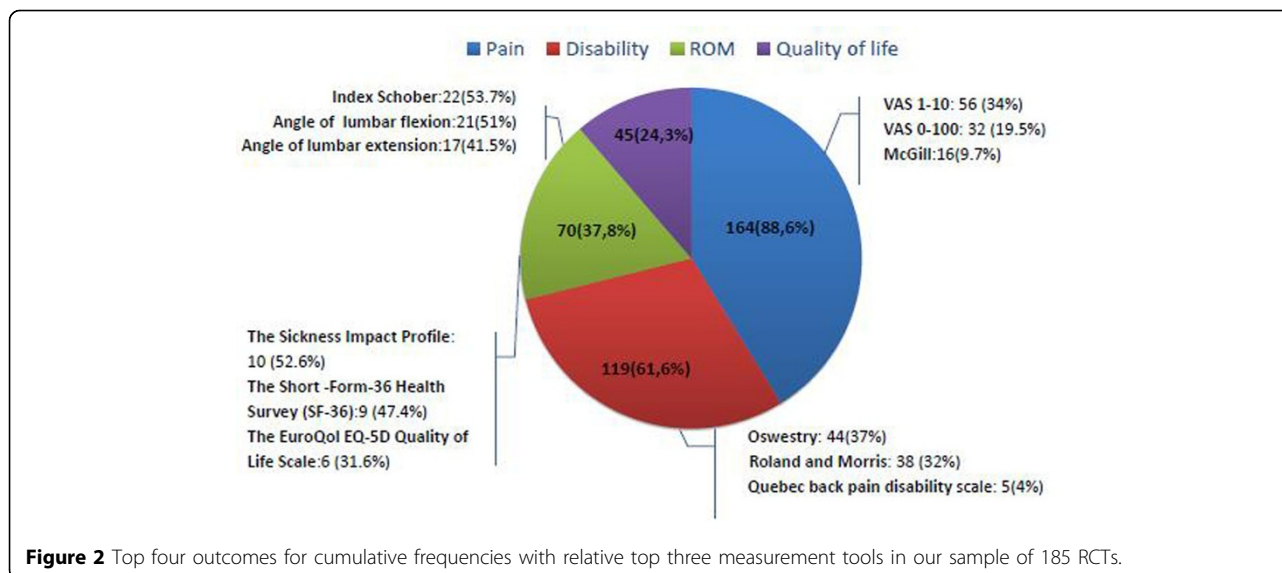
Figure 1 Checklist of completeness of outcome reporting

What: which outcome e.g., pain; With What: the instrument to measure that outcome e.g., visual analogue scale; How: how the instrument is applied e.g., visual analogue scale from 0 to 100; When: at which follow up e.g., immediately after the intervention period; Who: the assessor e.g., a physical therapist; Who How: the detection status with reference to potential bias (i.e., systematic differences between groups in how outcomes are determined) e.g., blinding of the outcome assessor.

* Correspondence: gre.caste@gmail.com

¹University of Milan, Milan, Italy

Full list of author information is available at the end of the article



Conclusions

A large number of outcome measures and a myriad of measurement instruments were used across all RCTs. The reporting was largely incomplete, suggesting better opportunities for the standardization of approaches and reporting.

Authors' details

¹University of Milan, Milan, Italy. ²Clinical Epidemiology Unit, I.R.C.C.S. Galeazzi Orthopedic Institute, Milan, Italy. ³Center of Biostatistics for Clinical Epidemiology, Department of Health Science, University of Milano-Bicocca, Monza, Italy. ⁴Spinal Cord Unit, Niguarda Ca' Granda Hospital, Milan, Italy. ⁵Laboratory of Kinematics and Robotics. I.R.C.C.S. Fondazione Ospedale San Camillo, Venezia, Italy. ⁶Service of Physiotherapy, National Institute of Injury Insurance, Milan, Italy. ⁷Unit of Functional Recovery, Fondazione Centro San Raffaele del Monte Tabor, Milan, Italy. ⁸Department of rehabilitation, Asl Biella, Italy. ⁹PSS Tn, Villa Igea, Trento, Italy. ¹⁰La Quiete casa di cura S.r.l., Varese, Italy. ¹¹Department of Physical Therapy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. ¹²Arthritis Research Centre of

Canada, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. ¹³Department of Biomedical Sciences for Health, University of Milan, Italy.

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