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Dear Editor

World Journal of Orthopedics

Thank you for your letter about our manuscript titled "Validation of the Functional Rating Index for the assessment of athletes with neck Pain". We thank the referees for their comments to improve our manuscript. Below is changes made to the manuscript and responses to comments.

Best wishes

Noureddin Nakhostin Ansari

Reviewer 1

1- There have actually been a lot of instruments, scales and questionnaires developed to assess the functional limitations for people with neck pain. However, it is unclear how PFRI differs from them. It would be important for the authors to compare and contrast instruments assessing functional limitations of neck pain in athletes and non-athletes. It would be helpful for the authors to provide more information of PFRI.

Response: We added a paragraph in "Introduction" to describe the reason for performing this study (Page 4, para 2). Paragraph 3 in "Introduction" explains the reason for using FRI for validation in athletes with neck pain. On page 5, we have described the FRI under title "Instruments".

2- It will also be helpful to add some discussion on the implications of this study for readers.

Response: We did not add an implication for this study because we felt that it might be repetition. We have described the rationale throughout the manuscript specifically in “Introduction” for performing the study. This study provides the clinicians with a tool for assessing pain and functional limitation in athletes with neck pain.

Thank you

Reviewer 2

1- Why do authors choose to validate FRI? You do have NDI which can evaluate functions of neck, so please put the reasons in Introduction part. ? Please add rationale of your study to validate FRI in athlete group.

Response: We added a paragraph in “Introduction” to describe the reason for performing this study (Page 4, para 2). Paragraph 3 in “Introduction” explains the reason for using FRI for validation in athletes with neck pain. On page 5, we have described the FRI under title “Instruments”.

2- Someone had study psychometric properties of this test in general patients with neck pain. Can it also be used in athlete group?

Response: We performed this study to answer to this question if the FRI is valid to use it in athletes with neck pain. The results obtained in this study showed that it can be used for this population.

3- Authors do not state about the duration of neck symptoms. Do you choose only acute or chronic phase of neck pain?

Response: We have reported it on page 7, para 1, line 3.

4- In discussion, authors compared their results with ref 10 (FRI for LBP in athletes). Why don't they compare with patients with neck pain (ref 9)?

Response: We could compare our results with those of general population with neck pain. But we did not, because there is a study specifically performed in athletes to perform comparisons with it.

5- Do we have to study for the other group of patients?

Response: Yes as described in Introduction, para 2, line 3.

6- Authors stated that lack of floor and ceiling effects indicated the content validity and the responsiveness of the PFRI, but in limitation part, you stated that the responsiveness of the PFRI to detect change over time was not evaluated. Which one is correct?

Response: Thank you. We added some words about it on page 10, limitations.

7- Please clarify about content validity of this test?

Response: We have described it on page 9, para 2, line 3-4.

8- Please clarify the meaning of clinical data in Table 1. Do you mean disability scores?

Response: It consists of disability scores as well as pain score. Therefore, we used “clinical data” for “disability score”.

Thank you

Reviewer 3

1- . Please describe more about the significance of using FRI as the evaluation system other than NDI and NRS 2. Why do the authors focus on neck pain of athletes.

Response: We have described it in Introduction, para 3. It is a measure to assess patients with neck pain and with low back pain. Since it was validated in patients with neck pain, low back pain, and athletes with low back pain, we decided to evaluate its metric properties in athletes with neck pain also.

2- Please describe more on the relationship between neck pain and the athletes, such as the kind of sports, etc.

Response: It was not our objective to evaluate the relationship between neck pain and type of sport. We aimed to evaluate if the FRI is valid and reliable in athletes with neck pain.

3- Please ask the English authority for some grammar error and the use of the phrases in this article

Response: It was checked and reviewed by Dr. Feise developer of the FRI and a co-author for this manuscript.

Thank you