

Concerning: Altaf, F., Drinkwater, J., Phan, K., Cree, A.K. *Spine Deformity* 5(2017):303-309

We read with great interest the article “Systematic Review of School Scoliosis Screening” by Altaf et al published in the September issue of *Spine Deformity*. We concur with the authors that “scoliosis screening should be implemented for detecting curves that need clinical monitoring”. However, we have doubt in the conclusion that *“the current evidence on routine scoliosis screening is only at most moderate”*. We would like to share some issues that deserve attention when interpreting the results:

1. the study should stand on a well-grounded literature research and analysis. We were surprised that the authors have not included in their literature review previous systematic reviews or meta-analyses [1] by Fong et al and explained how they informed the need of another systematic review/meta-analysis.
2. at least two previous well-conducted studies have shown that the evaluation of scoliosis screening should be based on a cohort study design with children being followed until they are skeletally mature, as there is still a fair risk of developing scoliosis during late adolescence [2,3]. Unfortunately, both these studies have not been included in this systematic review despite they should be eligible according to Altaf’s selection criteria.
3. the study has not extracted information on whether the included studies evaluated screening programs that were implemented as “routine” programs. Therefore, the evidence collected was a mix of “routine” and ad hoc scoliosis screening programs.
4. the software used for the meta-analysis was not mentioned, making it difficult for the readers to verify the results.

5. the authors did not assess the quality of the included studies and thus it would be more appropriate to title this as a meta-analysis instead of a systematic review. More importantly, it is uncertain how the authors considered the evidence as “low to moderate”.

Although the authors have studied an important issue, we have considerable reservation with the methodology and the derived conclusions.

References

- [1] Fong DY, Lee CF, Cheung KM, et al. A meta-analysis of the clinical effectiveness of school scoliosis screening. *Spine*. 2010;35(10):1061-71.
- [2] Luk KD, Lee CF, Cheung KM, et al. Clinical effectiveness of school screening for adolescent idiopathic scoliosis: a large population-based retrospective cohort study. *Spine*. 2010;35(17):1607-14.
- [3] Yawn BP, Yawn RA, Hodge D, et al. A population-based study of school scoliosis screening. *JAMA*. 1999;282(15):1427-32.