Reviewer's report

Title: Differences in Presentation of Symptoms between Women and Men with Intermittent Claudication

Version: 2 Date: 20 May 2011

Reviewer: Gavin Bryce

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Major Compulsory revisions
This paper now reads really well. The abstract, introduction and methods are clear and concise, and it is apparent from the outset what the main aims are.

The text in some of the results section remains slightly difficult to decipher and I think much of this is as a result of my own comment asking for more numbers/proportions/p-values in the text. I apologise for this and hope the suggestions below in the ‘Minor Essential Revisions’ section make amends and ease the final corrections.

The final paragraph in the results section makes fascinating reading and all the points in the discussion are relevant and well defended in response to my own comments.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Results, page 10, paragraph 1 – In my previous comments I ask for number, proportions and p-values for all data. Whilst this is normally required when the data is not present elsewhere if it is within attached tables this is unnecessary. I take responsibility for misleading with my comments and suggest paragraph 1 should read as follows from the second sentence: ‘Group 1 subjects were older compared to Group 2 subjects (p<0.001). Men were more likely to have suffered a stroke in both groups (Group 1 p<0.001; Group 2 p=0.007). In Group 1 men were more likely to suffer from DM than women (p=0.047), and in both groups men were more likely to have CAD than women (Group 1 p<0.001; Group 2 p<0.001). Smoking habits, while more common in Group 1 compared to Group 2 (62.5% vs 50.8%, p<0.001), revealed similar patterns from a sex perspective in both groups. There was however an increased likelihood of a smoking history in men (Group 1 p<0.001; Group 2 p<0.001).’

2. Results, page 10, paragraph 2, line 3/4 – In the same sentence you describe ‘lower walking speed’ and ‘reduced walking speed’ with different p-values. Are these the same measures and if so why different p-values?

3. Results, page 11, paragraph 2 – Again would be better if read: ‘Walking distances were similar between the sexes, with pain free distance of 111m (SD132) for men and 137m (SD160) for women (p=0.58), and absolute distances of 288m (SD 138) for men and 296m (SD 160) for women (p=0.19).

4. Results, page 11, paragraph 3, line 2 – p-value for time thinking about leg pain
does not agree with table. Should be $p=0.045$ and not ‘$p=0.0045$’.

5. Results, page 11, paragraph 3, line 1 – Whilst I agree it is ok to put data that is close to statistical significance in the results section (if it is clinically relevant), you should say it is not significant in the text. Something like ‘ICQ data showed that women spent more time thinking about leg pain ($p=0.045$), and although not statistically significant showed that men were more likely to report severe leg pain ($p=0.067$) [Table 3].’

6. Results, page 11, paragraph 3, line 3 – Again, whilst I suggested reporting on DUS values I do not think adding the actual percentages of significant stenoses in the text adds much (and maybe clutters the text) given it is clear in Figure 1. This may read better if: ‘There was no significant difference in the presence of vessel stenosis identified on DUS between men and women at the level of the iliac artery ($p=0.373$), superficial femoral artery ($p=0.513$), or popliteal artery ($p=1.0$) [Figure 1].’

7. Conclusion, page 16, line 5-7 – The final sentence reads more like a question and is not quite clear. I think you mean ‘Accordingly, the results of this study suggest that atypical symptoms of IC among women should be viewed as having a similar consequence on exercise performance as that of classical IC.’ or similar.

Discretionary Revisions
1. Introduction, page 3, paragraph 1, line 3 - Might read better if ‘….PAD when diagnosis is based only on….’
2. Methods, page 6, paragraph 2, line 6 - Should this read ‘because of immobility’ rather than ‘because their immobility’
3. Discussion, page 13, paragraph 1, line 3 – Might read better if ‘…more often than men do regardless if they are diagnosed as suffering from IC or not. Second…..’
4. Discussion, page 13, paragraph 2, line 8 – Would read better if ‘…it appears that the IC patients are correctly diagnosed. This is….’.
5. Discussion, page 14, paragraph 1, line 5 – Should read ‘..is that WIQ is not an accurate…’ (rather than ‘not is’).
6. Discussion, page 15, paragraph 1, line 3 – Should read ‘…Overall it is difficult to find….’ (rather than ‘is it’).

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.