Reviewer's report

Title: Current utility of the ankle-brachial index (ABI) in general practice: implications for its use in cardiovascular disease screening

Version: 2 Date: 1 December 2013

Reviewer: Jenny Doust

Reviewer's report:

The paper provides some useful information on the under-utilisation of ABI in general practice in Wales and the need for standardisation of the techniques for measuring ABI before it could be used as a screening test.

Major compulsory revisions

The paper would be stronger if:

1) the authors provided evidence that ABI provides predictive information for the risk of cardiovascular disease above the standard risk factors and not just that the relative risk of CVD is increased in patients with PAD, and particularly in those with asymptomatic PAD; and

2) there was evidence that the lack of standardisation reduces the diagnostic accuracy of ABI for peripheral arterial disease, rather than relying on a consensus of guidelines.

Minor essential revisions:

1) The statement that there are calls for ABI to screen for PAD in the background requires a reference;

2) The statements supporting the need to rest patients prior to ABI, etc which are currently at the end of the discussion would be better as a box and referred to in the method section of the paper.

3) The numbers in table 3 are based on small denominators. This is a major limitation of the paper and should also be discussed in the discussion.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

No conflict of interest