Reviewer's report

Title: Choosing surgery: patients' preferences within a trial of treatments for anterior cruciate ligament injury. A qualitative study

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Reviewer: Lynn Snyder-Mackler

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written and intriguing report about patients' attitudes and beliefs about reconstructive surgery of the ACL. The methods used allow the individuals to emerge and in this case, it is these individual responses that make the story ring true clinically. The desire to skip to the top of the waiting list is common in some countries, but not in others (e.g. US). The attitudes of surgeons is briefly discussed, but studies in the US (cited Marx), Canada and the UK all show a strong preference for surgical management by surgeons. Our work (Hurd, Fitzgerald) is a bit misrepresented. Our patients were all on the surgical schedule. Some did not go on to surgery, but practice patterns in the US strongly favor surgery and most eventually went through with it, even if they were asymptomatic.

I think the work is very interesting and well-presented. It is long, but the patients' comments are all carefully culled to present the subtleties of the author’s points. The interpretation is scholarly and thoughtful. The authors should discuss surgeons’ preference and the waiting list – no waiting list conundrum in terms of generalizability of this work to the world population.

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Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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'