Reviewer's report

Title: What are the important components of the clinical assessment of hand problems in older adults in primary care? Results of a Delphi study.

Version: 1 Date: 12 April 2010

Reviewer: J Hobby

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The question is a little vague, and there is no very clear objective for how the authors intend to proceed with the questions and assessments that they have received.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The Delphi methodology seems to have been followed appropriately - it is a pity that the authors have not included a specialist hand surgeon on the panel. I undersatnad that the setting was intended to be primary care, but many of the patients who are referred on from primary care will end up with a hand surgeon and this would address the authors problems with a prepodence of inflammatory conditions. The choice to retain monofilament sensibility testing is an illustration of the panel chosen, and seems inappropriate for general practice.

3. Are the data sound?

Yes (see above)

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Not really

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Yes - however the authors have not looked at other previous similar exercises (eg. developing the michigan hand questionnaire).

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Conclusion

I think that this article can be published with little change, as it contains some useful information. However I am not convinced that it will make a major contribution to the assessment of hand conditions in general practice without quite a lot more work. It would be worth considering what are the conditions that present to general practice (non specific upper limb pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, dupuytrens contracture, thumb base arthritis, trigger finger and ganglia) and considering how the questions identified will help the GP to assess and manage these.