Reviewer’s report

Title: Sexual health for women with RA in relation to physiotherapy - a qualitative study

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Reviewer: Willy van Berlo

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This is a small qualitative study among 10 women with RA about the impact of RA on sexual functioning. It is well written, although a bit extensively when considering the impact of the results. I have a few comments that can be considered as discretionary; although to my taste the article could have been more concentrated, I think it can be an interesting read for professionals who deal with these patients.

1. A sample of 10 is really small, it is a pity the authors did not include a few more patients in the study (preferably 20 or 25).

2. From a sexologist point of view, some of the results are not very startling. The conclusion that sexual health is considered as a phenomenon with physical, psychological, emotional and relational experiences is an obvious one, and well known to the readers (I hope). The indirect influences on sexual health are also a bit obvious, especially when it comes to the physical effects. The citation that an RA-patient ‘feels handicapped’, or that ‘it affects one’s health somehow’ does not give new insights I guess. The interesting part is of course the impact of (physical) constraints on sexual health.

3. What struck me was that the respondents had not reflect on improving their sexual health, but had quite a few suggestions how to do so (although, again, not all of them were that conclusive, f.e. 'less pain' and 'increased sexual desire’ as such are not very interesting remarks; how to achieve this is the relevant question here). Why don't these women improve their sex lives, did the researcher ask?

4. The most interesting section of the article, and the most contributing to the body of knowledge is the part on the effects of physiotherapy. I think this topic deserves a more elaborate study, for which the present study could serve as an interesting pilot.

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

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.