Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 22 April 2010

Reviewer: Willy van Berlo

Reviewer's report:

The authors made an extensive effort to address the comments of the reviewers, which I appreciate of course. However, I still have a few major and minor remarks that need to be addressed.

1. First and most important: this article is about a qualitative study including 10 respondents. Ten is a really low number for qualitative research. However, the results of a study like this can be used in a descriptive and explorative way, when it concerns a new phenomenon or a new topic in the research on RA and sexuality, such as the influence of physiotherapy on sexual functioning. And even then, I would consider it as a pilot, with promising results for further research. This should be the aim of this study. A qualitative study with 10 respondents on sexual functioning of women with RA cannot be the issue. There is more research, with more robust samples, on this subject. It is all right to describe the sexual experiences and use quotations, which are very informative, but these should not be presented as a result as such, but only in the context of the aim of this study: the influence of physiotherapy on sexual functioning.

2. p. 6: According to Giorgi’s recommendations etc.: I do not understand this phrase, what is meant here? Either leave out or explain.

3. The information given in the discussion about one of the respondents belongs in the results section.

4. My earlier remark about suggested improvements to sexual health is not sufficiently addressed: The women suggested quite a few possible improvements (some of which are pretty obvious, such as decrease of pain and increase of arousal), but did they actually make achievements in this respect? Did physiotherapy help?

5. The conclusion needs reconsideration: the first one is a fact (see also below) and overlaps with #2, which is more relevant. With regard to #3: physiotherapy is the issue here; decrease of physical difficulties is too obvious.

In general, the text needs revision on some points, both with regard to the phrasing and the level of the English language, grammar and spelling.

p. 3: sexual health difficulties due to RA can appear before, during and after sexual activities: sexual difficulties and the causes of sexual difficulties are mixed up here. Pain, decreased mobility etc. are not sexual difficulties. Equally, fatigue
pain, etcetera, cannot be perceived as sexual difficulties, they can cause sexual difficulties, such as decreased sexual desire, decreased arousal, problems with orgasm and decreased satisfaction. Moreover, the addition before, during and after sexual activities is not relevant. A decrease in desire sometimes leads to no sexual activity at all. Even so, sexual dissatisfaction can also occur because there isn’t any sexual activity.

p. 9: Sexual health was experienced as a multidimensional .... This is not a new or sensational result. In fact, the science of sexology is based on a biopsychosocial model. A relevant result here is that the respondents obviously experience and describe it as such. Please present it that way. Besides, the sentence is not right: sexual health is not a relationship and sexual health containing sexual aspects is too obvious .....  

p. 11: the paragraph starts with possibilities to increase sexual health (did the respondents get a brochure with suggestions? This is not clear), and half way p. 12 the text suddenly turns to the effects of physiotherapy. This is the most important part of the article and should be elaborated.

p. 13: what has a polo neck to do with sexual health?


In short: the article should be more concise, and focus on the main goal, namely the effect of physiotherapy. Additionally, the English has to be improved.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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'