Reviewer's report

Title: Age and sex differences in disabling foot pain prevalence using different definitions of the Manchester Foot Pain and Disability Index

Version: 1 Date: 11 July 2011

Reviewer: Sara Muller

Reviewer's report:

All of my comments constitute discretionary revisions

This paper reports of the comparison of three definitions of disabling foot pain derived from the MFPDI. I think this is an important piece of work that extends that previously carried out with this instrument. I have a few minor comments.

The Background should perhaps be clearer in respect of the need for a definition of disabling foot pain that can detect differences between age and sex groups. This is tricky, as the authors say that a limitation of previous research is the absence of a validated assessment tool. I think the authors must therefore be careful that they are not basing the hypothesis for this study on ‘flawed’ evidence from previous studies. Having said that, I am not disagreeing with their hypothesis, I just think that there is the potential for it to be a bit circular, given the current state of evidence.

I think the authors could justify why they needed to ask in their telephone interviews whether the participant still had foot pain. Given the nature of pain, one would expect it to fluctuate, so was there a large gap between the survey and the phone call in which the underlying problem might have been expected to resolve?

The authors may wish to add, that in addition to being similar to the findings of Roddy et al, these analyses confirm the definition outside the narrow age group used in Roddy et al’s study.

Aside of the prevalence of disability found from the various definitions, the authors should perhaps also reflect on the different concepts covered under Definitions A, B and C. Definitions A and B cover more than one dimension of disability (pain intensity, function, appearance), whereas Definition C covers only function. The authors do allude to this in the Discussion, but I think it could be explored further.

Tables
1. I don’t like the use of arrows in the Tables to show where differences are. I can’t work out what they are trying to show. I think the chi-square test and description of the differences in enough. 2. Where there are small numbers in cells (e.g. <5), as Fisher’s exact test would be more appropriate than a chi-square and would get away from the footnotes saying “insufficient cell count”. 3. For the age tables, the chi-square test for trend could be used (linear-by-linear) in SPSS.
This is largely an editorial point relating to how many tables can be published versus the size of tables, but have the authors considered combining Tables 3, 4 and 5 and Table 6, 7 and 8?

Figure 1: should all those in the non-completions box (with the exception of the person who refused), not be Excluded, as you could not verify that they still had foot pain?

I am not convinced that Figure 2 and 3 add anything to the paper, as the information is also given in the tables. If you choose to keep Figure 2 though, could confidence intervals be added?

Possible typos

Background (2nd paragraph): do the authors mean to say that there are four constructs to the MFPDI, or are they counting work and leisure separately?

Ethical approval section: “Ethical approval for the study was obtained…”, rather than “Ethics approval…”

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests