Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 10 October 2011

Reviewer: Anthony Redmond

Reviewer's report:

The authors have provided a comprehensive explanation of the subtlety of their interpretation of the definitions of the presence of italic all italic foot pain versus presence of italic disabling italic foot pain. Their argument is well thought through and complete as I would have expected, and addresses my conceptual concerns completely.

Minor Essential Revisions

On the other hand I did need the authors’ explicit response to hand when re-reading the manuscript in order to satisfy myself that I had fully understood the nuances. I suspect other readers might also need to be hand-held to fully grasp the importance of what is a minor distinction in wording. For clarity in the final version, I strongly suggest that the authors consider incorporating wording from the three excellent paragraphs provided in their response to my review, into the background section of the main manuscript. By way of illustration, my opening comment includes the authors’ own italicized emphasis taken from the response letter, through which the subtlety of the point was emphasized. Similarly I found in para 2 of the response letter, the explicit emphasis of the distinction between reported frequency and resulting impact of reported pain to be very helpful and I believe that incorporating this in the background section would also help greatly. To their credit, the authors have addressed some of this in the revised discussion section but it is too late in the manuscript to be used to inform the reader’s own interpretation of the results without referring back.

I appreciate that I may be at fault myself for lacking the necessary insight to pick up these arguments without prompting, but to help other readers with similar intellectual shortcomings I do suggest that the authors translate some of the text from their response letter into the background section of the m/s so as to more explicitly set out the underlying concepts.

Level of interest: An article of importance 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