Reviewer's report

Title: The outcome of total ankle arthroplasty and ankle fusion in rheumatoid arthritis: a systematic review.

Version: 1 Date: 22 March 2013

Reviewer: Tom Van Raaij

Reviewer’s report:

I congratulate the authors with their extensive work. I think this systematic review of the treatment of symptomatic ankle OA in RA patient by arthroplasty or arthrodesis is of interest for the BMC musculoskeletal reader.

The question is proposed well.

I have three comments;

Major compulsory revisions

the authors state that there is no gold standard for the validity evaluation of observational interventions studies and that they composed a quality checklist. Why did they not use the critical appraisal of observational studies tool (Deeks) [Deeks JJ, Dinnes J, D'Amico R, Sowden AJ, Sakarovitch C, Song F, Petticrew M, Altman DG. Evaluating non-randomised intervention studies. Health Technol Assess. 2003;7:1–173.], and/or the methodological index for non-randomized studies (MINORS) form [Slim K, Nini E, Forestier D, Kwiatkowski F, Panis Y, Chipponi J. Methodological index for non-randomized studies (minors): development and validation of a new instrument. ANZ J Surg. 2003;73:712–16]? Also they did not use the methodologic quality as an additional criterion for inclusion. Why did they not use a cut-off value (e.g a score of 50% or more on the checklist)

Minor essential revisions

Results should match the methods paragraph. E.g. methodological quality is also determined by journal impact. This should be explained first in the methods paragraph.

Title should be mid-term outcome because mean follow-up time in both groups is less than 5 years.

Discretionary revisions

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