Reviewer's report

Title: Heterogeneity in health status and the influence of patient characteristics across patients seeking musculoskeletal orthopaedic care - a cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Laura Laslett

Reviewer's report:

This is a clearly written article, and it could be very interesting, but there is a lot of analysis and it could be simplified. I find it difficult to interpret as is.

I don't understand what the numbers are in the tables of path regressions. Are these beta coefficients? I find these difficult to read as I have to read all of the confidence intervals to find out if factors are significant or not. I suggest that the authors streamline the tables, add p values and bold significant values.

I think the biggest issue is that the age structure of the groups are not comparable, and that skews all the socio-demographic variables. I suggest that the authors present that data in two ways: firstly non-age standardised, then age-standardised. If there are differences between the cohorts on the non age standardised analyses but the differences disappear on age-standardised analyses I would find this compelling evidence of the authors hypotheses.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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