Reviewer's report

Title: What does standard rehabilitation practice after total hip replacement in the UK entail? A mixed qualitative and quantitative study.

Version: 2 Date: 4 December 2012

Reviewer: Esther Williamson

Reviewer's report:

This is potentially an interesting and useful paper but it requires some improvements.

Major revisions

1. You need to provide more detail about the focus group. How did you recruit the participants? Who conducted the focus group? What form did it take? How long did it last? What did you ask them? Did you carry out a consensus exercise to select the items for the questionnaire where they voted on specific questions or did you extract the themes for questions from their discussions during the analysis? What type of qualitative analysis did you carry out? Did you do any validity checks on the findings? Are you able to outline the main findings from the focus group in the results?

2. In the discussion you say that you piloted the survey. This should be described in the methods along with any changes as a result of the pilot.

3. The description of how you identified physiotherapists to complete the questionnaire also needs further clarification. How were the 171 hospitals identified? You say in the discussion that there were 392 centres in the UK that perform THR each year. Why were all of these centres not approached?

4. Why did you only get 63 email addresses? Did each person you had an email for nominate one other person? Or could they pass the survey onto more?

5. Using the CSP website is another good way to reach participants but do you know how many potential participants this provided for you? It makes it difficult to accurately calculate a response rate if you do not know what your actual pool of potential participants was. This needs to be discussed.

6. You state that you presented the findings separated into the occupational grading of the physiotherapist that responded. Why did you present it like this? Did you expect to find a difference in the type of exercises prescribed based on experience of the physio? You do not carry out any analysis that tests this hypothesis. This would be interesting to know but if you do not carry this analysis then I would suggest there is no need to present the data in this way and your tables could be combined and reduced
7. Page 7 - Where does the 130 come from as the number of potential participants? Where did the 106 participants come from (hospitals or CSP website)? These figures need to be justified more clearly. A flow chart might be useful here to specify where participants came from – the hospitals you contacted or from the CSP website.

8. A lot of the results would be better in a table to reduce the text. Your tables could also be combined. Paying attention to lay out, for example, in Table 2 combining the two columns – number and frequency – into one column i.e. number of responses (%)

9. Pre-operative phase (p8) – you ask about the most important muscles to target during rehabilitation – are you referring to pre-op rehabilitation or post-op? This is not clear. Why were questions about post-op rehab asked about in the pre-operative phase?

10. Immediate post-operative phase - there are questions in the survey that are not reported here: who mobilises the patients? How often were they seen? Equipment provided? Discharge criteria?

11. Continuing rehab (p9) – What time frame are patients commonly seen? Also, some questions are not reported – discharge criteria and number of sessions.

12. Some additional limitations to explore:
   a. I was surprised that you did not explore the reasons that physiotherapists did not use PRT as part of the survey. I think this is a limitation of the work and should be discussed. This suggests an area requiring further research to enable successful implementation of PRT in the NHS as part of post THR rehab.
   b. Discuss why all 392 centres were not included in the survey. How does this impact on the generalizability of your findings?

Minor revisions

1. You have defined the two aims of the paper for the paper but these should be made more explicit as they are somewhat lost in the introduction. As I understand them they are to 1. Define standard care rehabilitation following a THR in the UK and 2. determine if PRT is prescribed as part of standard care.

2. On page 5, you state that commonly used rehabilitation regimes for older people are based on functional types of exercises, which do not involve external loading and then you list the exercises. How do you know this and if you already know this then why do you need to carry out this research? Is this specific to THR or do you mean more generically. Please clarify.

3. Can the focus group findings be summarised in the results section?

4. P 10 – you give criteria for discharge – are these results? If so they should be in the results section.
5. You also provide reasons that physiotherapists do not use PRT but was this actually explored and where do you get this information from?

6. Overall, you could improve the structure of the discussion. Summary of findings, relevance of findings, generalizability of findings, limitations, further research.

7. I am not sure only doing one focus group is a limitation as you also followed this up with pilot work. This is actually a strength of the work and you point this out that considerable work went into developing the questionnaire. I agree that content analysis of the materials gave patients would have been helpful.

8. More weighting needs to be given to the qualitative aspect of the work if you are to state in the title that it is a mixed method study.

9. You should also state in the abstract the aim of assessing if PRT is part of standard care as this seemed to be focus of the paper and you refer to this aspect of the work in the results and conclusion of the abstract.

I have attached a word document with my comments in the sections under the headings that they ask reviewers to consider which might be helpful.

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

**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