Reviewer's report

Title: Classifying health-related quality of life outcomes of total hip arthroplasty

Version: 1 Date: 28 April 2005

Reviewer: Olivier Ethgen

Reviewer's report:

General

This is an original and interesting study. However, whilst the statistical method is advanced, it is not readily described.

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined? YES

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work? THE METHOD IS APPROPRIATE BUT, IN FACT, DESCRIPTION OF THE METHODOLOGY CONFUSES THE ISSUE AND NEED MAJOR REVISION.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled? YES

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? NO

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? YES

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? YES

7. Is the writing acceptable? YES

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Please, address when NO or UNCLEAR

1. Title:
   Clear and appropriate: YES
   Accurate reflection of content: YES

2. Abstract
   Concise summary of stated objectives, relevant data and major conclusions: YES

3. Study rationale
   The research question is clearly answered: YES
   Importance of research question is clearly outlined: YES

4. Timing
   Timing on the study is described: YES
   Time horizon is appropriate for study purpose: YES
5. Patient selection/ exclusion criteria
Selection clearly described: YES
Appropriate: YES
Population clearly described: YES

6. Methodology
Clearly defined: NO
Justified in relation to research question: PROBABLY, BUT NEED BETTER DESCRIPTION!

7. Study instruments
Instrument(s) used was appropriate and validated: YES
Instrument(s) used was administered correctly: YES
Instrument(s) and administration clearly described: YES

8. Statistical analysis
Appropriate: YES
Reported clearly and accurately: NO
Sample size adequate: YES

9. Results
Answers research question: YES
Reported clearly and accurately: NO

10. Discussion
Discusses results impact: YES
Compares results with other studies if available: YES
Discusses study limitations: YES
Discusses generalizability: NO

11. Conclusion
Follows logically from results: YES
Clear/convincing: YES

Comment: the sentence second, the performance is not concluding at all. It is a method sentence!

12. Illustrations
Appropriate tables and figures: YES
Clearly and easily understood: UNCLEAR

13. References
Appropriate: YES, but there are two reference lists. I guess the second one is the definite one.

14. Language:
Clearly written: YES

15. Is this a new idea? YES

16. Could this change practice? POTENTIALLY

Major compulsory revision: in view of points 6, 8 9 and 12.

Even if I understand in a rather general way the manuscript, many points remain obscure. The last
paragraph of the introduction is in fact a paragraph of methodology. The result part is in fact a juxtaposition of methodology and results. The manuscript should correspond to a straight intro/method/results/discussion repartition. I will ask the authors to detail readily their method and present frank and clear results! This is my major comment on this manuscript: the manuscript and the methodology employed must be definitely more clearly presented!

For instance:

- More precision are needed on the tobit approach
- Table 2 and figure 5 represent the same concept, no?
- The text describing figure 6 and figure 7 in the manuscript are very difficult to understand.
- In the Assessment of the classification instrument paragraphs, I do not understand the last sentence of the first paragraph: Because the functional subscale? What are we talking about here?
- The following paragraph The postoperative score was left-censored is also quite unclear.

In the result part, one would expect to see a short description of population (age, distribution between sex, etc.) like some data on the distribution of the WOMAC.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
- NONE -

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
- NONE -

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.