Reviewer's report

Title: Problems and needs for improving primary care of osteoarthritis patients: the views of patients, general practitioners and practice nurses.

Version: 1 Date: 19 September 2005

Reviewer: Catherine MacLean

Reviewer's report:

General

This manuscript addresses an important topic, i.e. the views of patients and providers with regard to what each group views as important in the provision of care for OA. The qualitative methods applied in this study are appropriate for gaining insight into the areas are and are not of importance to patients and providers. Although adequate and appropriate to generate hypotheses about areas of importance, areas in which care may be good and areas in which care might be lacking, the methods and small sample size employed in this study cannot be used to draw strong conclusions about these topics.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

1. Overall the manuscript lacks a framework for the presentation of results. The manuscript would be strengthened greatly if the authors were to define a set of content domains into which the comments by participants could be categorized. Describing the results for the same content domains for each of the participant groups would make the manuscript more understandable and may allow for the detection of important themes or areas of disagreement across groups.

2. Although this study used qualitative methods, it would be useful if the authors would quantitate their findings. It would be useful to reader to know how often various themes were encountered for each patient group. For example, the authors state that “Most GPs criticised [sic] that the specialists generally did not inform the patient sufficiently.” It would be informative to state how many GPs held this opinion. A useful addition to the manuscript would be a table that described the number of subjects from each group that reported important themes stratified by domain.

3. Describe the methods used by the authors to decide which opinions should be reported and which should not. For example, were there any GPs with the opinion that specialists did “inform the patient sufficiently”? The authors need to define a systematic approach to evaluating the data and then systematically report the data.

4. Clarify throughout the manuscript that the findings represent the opinions of study participants and that these have not been tested for validity. For example the authors report that general practitioners had “no major problem” distinguishing between “pain or problems which are caused by the joint or periarticular structures.” It is not known from the study whether or not general practitioners do or do not correctly distinguish between these (or other) possible etiologies of joint pain. We know only that the GPs report that they have no difficulty. This should be so stated.

5. Conclusions should be restated as to follow from the data presented in the manuscript. For example, rather than stating “Primary care physicians should address patients’ concerns of pain and disability”, which does not clearly derive from the data presented, the authors might consider stating something like “Although patients with osteoarthritis report pain and disability as a primary concern, they do not feel that these topics are adequately addressed by their GP or specialty physicians. At the same time GP and specialty physicians report XXXX about their management of pain and function for patients with OA.”
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.