Reviewer's report

Title: Rheumatoid arthritis patients' experiences of wearing therapeutic footwear - A qualitative investigation

Version: 1 Date: 15 August 2007

Reviewer: Gareth John Treharne

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Rheumatoid arthritis patients' experiences of wearing therapeutic footwear – A qualitative investigation

- General

This is an interesting qualitative study of specialist footwear as an aspect of healthcare that has a particular relevance to patient involvement in decision about treatment in a wider sense.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The results might be better presented in the abstract as two themes that were common across the sexes (feelings about footwear and experiences of practitioners involved in footwear provision) and then three themes that were considered unique to female participants.

2. There are no exemplars of how the one male participant who is reported as having talked about body image did so (bottom of page 10). It would be more expedient to present the two themes that overlapped between men and women immediate following the point where they are initially introduced for women.

3. Do the authors (particularly the interviewer and main analyst) have clinical roles in this field? If so, how has this impacted on their interpretation of the themes about practitioners who provide footwear?

- Minor Essential Revisions

4. The nature of 'specialist footwear' and clinical indications should be explained in a little more detail (for a general audience) in the background section of the abstract.

5. The penultimate line of the background section of the abstract should read "RA patients' experiences" (with the possessive apostrophe for the plural).

6. Given that this would be read by an international audience, the meaning of the abbreviation NHS should be provided in the abstract.

7. The beginning of the methodology section is a fragment rather than a complete sentence and has a confusing location for the citation the book on
Heidegger (reference 15): this makes it look as if this book is about footwear. Also, the first person is used in this sentence ("I used") and later within the methodology ("I asked"); this is inappropriate for a paper with multiple authors. The author who carried out the interviews should be indicated with their initials.

8. The sentence on page 5 that starts "The participants gender..." requires a possessive apostrophe.

9. "Can't" also requires an apostrophe (as it is a contraction) in quotes on pages 7, 8 (twice) and 11.

10. The discussion could be improved by starting it with a summary of the aims and findings of the study. At present it starts by tackling the fact that qualitative findings are often criticised for a lack of generalisability, which seems out of place. Moreover, the authors state that "... the participants were all females..." which is not true of this paper.

11. The second sentence on page 13 ("The fact that evidence^8-11^ suggests that patients frequently choose not to wear indicates that it is likely that their experience...") appears to be missing a word.

- Discretionary Revisions

12. It would be useful to state in the methods section of the abstract that a hermeneutical phenomenological analysis was undertaken.

13. The statement that "These themes are illustrated by using exemplars from the transcripts." could be moved from the results section of the abstract to the methods section or removed entirely.

14. The phrase "the too frequent patient choice" (page 3, final line) could be stated more clearly.

15. It would be interesting to know where were the interviews carried out — at the hospital, in participants' homes or at another location? Also, were third parties present during any of the interviews?

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 importance in its field

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

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.