Author's response to reviews

Title: Knee complaints seen in general practice: athletes versus non-athletes

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the comments on our revised manuscript “Knee complaints seen in general practice: active sport participants versus non-sport participants”

We will discuss the remarks of the reviewers below.

Reviewer’s report
Title: Knee complaints seen in general practice: athletes versus non-athletes
Version: 2 Date: 11 February 2008
Reviewer: Elaine Thomas

Reviewer’s report:
I am satisfied with the authors’ responses to the majority of my comments. I leave five points as editorial decisions (the points numbered 23, 26, 29, 31 and 38 in my original review). I have four points, below, that require further attention.

Minor essential revisions

Previous point number 2
In the original review we pointed out that the authors made no comparisons in the Discussion to similar work from other studies, a point mirrored by Reviewer 3. In their response to the third reviewer, the authors state that there are no similar papers with which to compare their study findings. This makes the current study innovative and more interesting to potential readers, and the authors should state this. It also eliminates the possibility of a reader wondering why no comparisons have been made.

Reply:
We agree with the reviewer and added the following text to the discussion section:
Page 9: “Because this is, to our knowledge, the first study comparing athletes and non-athletes with knee complaints, we cannot make any comparisons on this subject with current literature. However, in the present study, traumatic injuries were seen in almost 35% of the athletes and almost 30% of the traumatic injuries of this group were sustained during a sport activity.”
Page 11, conclusions: “To our knowledge, this is the first study comparing athletes and non-athletes regarding knee pain in general practice.”

Previous point number 16
The original point was in regard to the sentence Table 1 presents baseline characteristics of the two groups. The sentence does not make it clear what the two groups are, i.e. they could be the dropouts and non-dropouts, or they could be the athletes and non-athletes. A simple re-wording which would avoid any ambiguity would be Table 1 presents baseline characteristics of the athletes and non-athletes.

Reply:
We agree with the reviewer and changed the text, page 7, line 1: “Table 1 presents baseline characteristics of the athletes and non-athletes.”

Previous point number 36
In the Methods (Outcome measures; page 5, line 7-8), the authors write. After one-year follow-up, satisfaction with the GPs policy, treatment, discomfort. Later in the Results (GPs initial policy and medical consumption; page 8, line 14) you write,
patients were very satisfied with the GPs treatment of their knee complaint. In the original review, I assumed that policy and treatment were two different measures. I could find no data in the original manuscript referring to satisfaction with GPs policy at one-year follow-up and hence suggested removing reference to it from the paper. If this is a misunderstanding, I apologise. If you actually considered the satisfaction with GP initial policy and treatment as a single variable, then

Reply:
We agree with the reviewer that this might be confusing. In the first sentence: “After one-year follow-up,” we meant “medical consumption” in stead of ‘treatment’. Therefore we removed ‘treatment’ from this sentence because the first revision added the sentence “The medical consumption of the patients, expressed in frequency of visits, was calculated over the 12 months follow-up period.” Therefore it is no longer necessary to mention the method of ‘medical consumption’. To clarify this further, we changed the following text:
Page 6, line 9: “patient satisfaction with GPs policy”
Page 8, line 15: In general, patients were very satisfied with the GP’s policy of their knee complaints. “

I suggest both the Methods and Results sections are reworded to refer to satisfaction with GPs initial policy and treatment.
Major essential revisions
Previous point number 15 (incorporating point 13)
It is true that most p-values mentioned in the text are accompanied by means or frequencies of the comparison groups. However, for the binary outcomes the main form of analysis used in the paper, as described in the Statistical Analysis section, is adjusted logistic regression with results presented as odds ratios (ORs) with 95% confidence intervals (CI). Of the six associations examined using logistic regression described in the Statistical Analysis section, i.e i) type of knee complaint to vi) discomfort during employment and daily activities, adjusted odds ratios are presented for only two i.e. those in Tables 2 and 3. Adjusted odds ratios are not presented in the text or in the tables for the associations with i) type of knee complaint, iv) patient satisfaction with treatment, v) recovery at one-year follow-up, vi) discomfort during employment and daily activities. Instead, simple percentages for each group are presented. However, this is not appropriate when an adjusted regression model has been generated. It is important that the description of the analysis given in the Statistical Analysis section corresponds to what data are presented in the text and/or tables and figures. I suggest that odds ratios and confidence intervals are the most appropriate form of presentation and I would like to see the presentation of the Results changed to correspond to what was laid out in the Statistical Analysis section.

Reply:
We agree with the reviewer and therefore added a column in Table 1 and added the odds ratio’s in the text:
Page 8, line 18: “(p=0.90; OR 0.99, 95%CI 0.93-1.06)“
Page 8, line 22: “(p=0.86, OR 1.01, 95%CI 0.90-1.13.”
Page 8, line 27: “(p=0.40; OR 1.15, 95%CI 0.83-1.58)“
Page 9, line 5: “(p=0.054; OR 0.62, 95%CI 0.38-1.01)“
Page 9, line 7: “(p=0.003; OR 0.56, 95%CI 0.38-0.83)“

Reviewer’s report
Title: Knee complaints seen in general practice: athletes versus non-athletes
Reviewer's report:
Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached) I am satisfied that the authors have addressed all my comments with one exception.
In the Statistical analyses section the paragraph on linear regression reads that athletic status is regressed on pain and function, as measured by the WOMAC. As athletic status is the dependent variable and dichotomous, then why has linear regression been employed?

Reply:
The dependent variables in this analyses were ‘pain, function measured by the WOMAC. We are interested in the influence of being an athlete or not on the outcomes pain and function. The outcomes are therefore considered as being dependent variables and therefore we applied linear regression analyses for these linear outcomes.

We modified our manuscript based on points raised by the reviewers (highlighted with blue in the manuscript).
With the above mentioned additions and revisions we fully complied with the comments of the reviewers. We hope that you find our manuscript in this revised form suitable for publication.

We look forward to hear from you.

Sincerely yours
On behalf of the co-authors,

Marienke van Middelkoop