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.

**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."

**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 GP's policy, treatment, discomfort..." Later in the Results (GP's initial policy and medical consumption; page 8, line 14) you write, "...patients were very satisfied with the GP's 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 GP's 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's initial policy and treatment as a single variable, then I suggest both the Methods and Results
sections are reworded to refer to satisfaction with GP’s 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, ie type of knee complaint to 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 type of knee complaint, patient satisfaction with treatment, recovery at one-year follow-up, 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.

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: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests