Reviewer’s report

Title: Surgeons’ beliefs and perceptions about removal of orthopaedic implants

Version: 1 Date: 22 January 2008

Reviewer: james wright

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

This article documents the significant controversy within the orthopaedic community about the advisability of removing orthopaedic implants on a routine basis. The main issue with this manuscript is the uncertainty of the sampling frame. Since these surgeons attended a course, we do not know if their views are representative of orthopaedic surgeons in different jurisdictions. That having been said, my sense is that their findings do reflect a genuine controversy within the orthopaedic community. This manuscript is awkwardly written and would need copy-editing as some of the phraseology is awkward. I have the following specific comments:

2. The authors suggest that there are no comparative studies examining the removal of hardware. The authors should cite some of the articles examining the risks of hardware removal.

4. In the methods they describe ‘developing’ a three page paper-based questionnaire. How was the content of this questionnaire developed?

6. They need to provide greater details about the sample size calculation. How did they arrive at the parameters.

7. The response rate, stated as 89.7%, should be based on all course attendees.

8. The results are difficult to follow.

9. The beginning of discussion results with an uncited assertion about the benefits of internal fixation.

10. The authors say that the desire of patients to get rid of metal implants after uneventful fracture healing is ‘comprehensible’. On the other hand, if it was shown to pose a significant risk of complications, I think leaving the implant in place would be equally comprehensible.

11. The second paragraph ends with the sentence ‘The incidence of complications with implant removal is unknown, and the reported complication rate ranges from null to 40%. This sentence would seem to be in contradiction. The authors should describe in more detail the reported complication rates.

12. A major limitation of any survey is that it may match surgeon’s behaviour, i.e. - what surgeons think they do may not be what they actually do. This warrants some discussion.
Minor Essential Revisions

1. The authors assert in the background that hardware removal is the most common elective procedure performed in industrial countries. I doubt this is true. What they simply need to say that hardware removal is a common procedure.

3. In the second paragraph, the authors talk about external and internal evidence. I do not accept their definition of internal evidence. They should simply state a survey is an appropriate method to determine the opinions of orthopaedic surgeons.

5. In the methods in the second paragraph, they should provide all response to categories for Likert scales.

**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:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interestS