Reviewer's report

Title: Diagnostic accuracy of existing methods for identifying diabetic foot ulcers

Version: 1 Date: 31 October 2010

Reviewer: Alistair A McInnes

Reviewer's report:

Reviewers report

The question posed by the authors is important in light of the pandemic of diabetes and the anticipated increase in the incidence of diabetic foot disease especially diabetic foot ulcer. The methods are well described and the and the use of electronic medical records as the gold standard plus the blinding of the two reviewers aids in the robust methodology. One concern that requires reassurance is that the two reviewers were required to read the notes and identify diabetic foot ulcer. It is possible that any heel ulcer may have been identified as a pressure ulcer only and not appeared as a diabetic foot ulcer. Reassurance on this point would be useful prior to publication.

The data is sound in terms of the methods of identification of the presence of a foot ulcer. The discussion and review of the different methods of identification is appropriate and the recording of sensitivity, specificity, etc is an absolute requirement. Perhaps in the discussion there could be a few lines on the identification of an ulcer as opposed to a wound or lesion. This is more than a semantic point. If gangrene or infection is present , it may have resulted without an ulcer being present. I note from the manuscript that the reviewers included any osteomyelitis or gangrene as a dfu as long as a dfu had preceded the gangrene or osteomyelitis. How was this verified? What did the reviewers do to identify the relationship of osteomyelitis or gangrene to a preceding ulcer? Same site or different location? What did the reviewers do with the presence of multiple ulcers? Did they count them as separate events?

The title and abstract convey what has been found. I would be tempted to add to the title ..in a hospital base population.

Minor Essential Revisions

It would be useful to describe the population that the VA hospital has provision for. Some socio-demographical data, ethnic population, and the presence of other hospitals in the region where diabetic patients may be referred to. It would be helpful to stress that this is a hospital based population study only and not a population based study.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

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