Reviewer’s report

Title: Looking through the ‘window of opportunity’: is there a new paradigm of podiatry care on the horizon in early rheumatoid arthritis?

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Reviewer: Philip Helliwell

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Looking through the ‘window of opportunity’: is there a new paradigm of podiatry care on the horizon in early rheumatoid arthritis?

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This review summarises evidence from clinical trials in the last 10-15 years and synthesizes the approach adopted by this (and other) groups to early rheumatoid arthritis. In the sense that this approach has now been ‘formalised’ this represents new and useful information for the readership of this journal and I wholeheartedly support it.

The authors emphasise that, wherever possible, they are employing appropriate clinical research but acknowledge that there are areas where the necessary data are not yet available. This is particularly so in the paragraph relating to ‘Targeted foot care’ where they argue the care ‘should be delivered by specialist podiatrists working in a multidisciplinary clinic in both primary and secondary care’. Further, ‘extended scope practice should include specialist training in diagnostic ultrasonography…, corticosteroid injection therapies; non-pharmacological interventions; gait analysis and rehabilitation’. Perhaps this lack of evidence should be acknowledged, unless they can adduce further justification.

For this reason it is appropriate to be wary of such blanket approaches when the trial evidence is lacking. We don’t know, for example, to what extent pharmacological therapies might predominate over mechanical therapies in this scenario. As an area ripe for further studies perhaps the authors should also provide, in a concluding paragraph, a ‘research agenda’ for the interested health care community to address.

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