Reviewer's report

Title: A survey of foot problems in community-dwelling older Greek Australians

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Reviewer: Wesley Vernon

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The paper usefully considers and demonstrates the foot health needs of the older Greek Australian population and serves as a reminder that such problems are not exclusively found in those groups for whom English is their first language. In this context, areas of unmet need are highlighted and the need for podiatry treatment in this population demonstrated.

This is a useful and topical paper, which although undertaken in Australia should stimulate podiatrists of all countries to consider the foot health needs of this group and other ethnic groups who may been neglected by podiatry services.

The paper is clearly presented, in general logically laid out and the issue being considered is well introduced.

The survey method and tools utilised in the work are appropriate and in the main, enough information is provided to enable the work to be replicated by others.

The discussion and conclusions are balanced and most of these link directly to the work presented. Additionally, the title adequately describes the work that has been undertaken.

I am not a statistician, however the statistical analysis does seem acceptable. I would however recommend seeking comment from a statistician on this aspect of the paper.

A number of minor points have been identified, which the authors should consider and address prior to publication. The following should be considered as minor compulsory revisions:

1) Discussion 1st Para: “...in older Greek. Australians.” Delete first period.

2) Discussion 1st Para: “...is very similar to population-based studies if older people” Typo – “if” should read “of”.

The following should be considered as discretionary revisions and are mainly points of clarification:

3) Background section para 2: Information is presented here across four separate sentences, all of which appear to have arisen from the Australian Census, which is cited at the end of the final sentence. Please could the authors re-work these sentences to make it clear that all are attributed to the Australian...
4) Background section para 2: Within this paragraph, reference is made to people born in Cyprus living in Australia. Please could clarification be made at this point that it is the Greek Cypriot population that is being considered here (as noted in the final para of the later discussion section) and could the proportion of those born in Cyprus of Greek origin (as opposed to Turkish Cypriots for example) also be suggested, if this differs from the total figure of Cypriot immigrants suggested here).

5) Methods (Participants): Note is later made that a convenience sample was used in the paper. Please could this sampling strategy be stated here.

6) Methods (Medical history questionnaire): “…15 common conditions listed…” Please could a list of these conditions be presented – possibly within a separate table.

7) Methods (Medical history questionnaire): Could the authors state on what basis the 15 conditions were selected

8) Methods (Medical history questionnaire): Figure 1 (Greek language version of the MFPDI – As many readers may be unable to read the Greek language, please could an English-translated version of the questionnaire used also be presented.

9) Methods (Clinical foot assessment): “Presence of hyperkeratotic lesions (corns and callus) were observed and documented.” Please state who undertook these observations (presumably podiatrists?)

10) Results (Participant characteristics): “Those who required more help…” – Here it would be more accurate to write “Those who stated that they required more help…”

11) Discussion 1st Para: “Given that 104 people volunteered it can be inferred that…” – Please change to “Given that 104 people volunteered and on the basis of the recruitment criteria, it can be inferred that…”

12) Discussion 1st Para: “…20% of older people attending these Greek-speaking citizens clubs have disabling foot pain.” From what is stated under “Methods (Participants), volunteers were required to have “foot pain” as opposed to “disabling foot pain”. While the fact that the sample may have included those with foot pain which is not strictly disabling is stated in the final para of “Discussion” as is the suggestion that definitions of “disabling foot pain” may include virtually all with foot pain, it would be pertinent to consider this at the earliest opportunity within the discussion. Please could the authors therefore consider this point in the first para of the “Discussion” section.

13) Discussion 1st Para: “This is likely to be an underestimate as many older people with foot pain may not have wanted to volunteer for the study” This postulation appears to be a little overstated from the reported findings. Please
could the authors “tone this down” (e.g. state “This may be…” as opposed to “This is likely to be…”)

14) Discussion 1st Para: “…is very similar to population-based studies if older people” Please specify what type of “older-people” population this is referring to (e.g. the general older population).

15) Discussion 2nd Para: “Furthermore, wearing shoes substantially narrower…” I presume that this is still referring to Menz and Morris’s findings, please make this explicit (e.g. “Furthermore, in Menz and Morris’s study wearing shoes substantially narrower…”

16) Discussion 3rd Para: Here, the low proportion of the sample receiving podiatry is considered as is the fact that this was reported as being because “they did not consider their foot problems to be severe enough or that they managed their foot problems themselves”. Please briefly consider the value and role of podiatry under these reported circumstances (which on the face of it currently reads as though professional intervention may not be warranted).

17) Discussion 4th Para: Here, the authors conclude that because people can’t self-manage by virtue of weakness, inflexibility, poor vision etc, professional intervention is required. If the problems experienced are amenable to self-management, this does not necessarily suggest that interventions at a professional level are required. Please could the authors briefly consider the role that sub-professional assistance could play under such circumstances.

18) Discussion 5th Para: “… there is little doubt that many older people with foot pain who were in attendance did not volunteer. As such, the sample cannot be considered…. I am not sure that this can be inferred from the data with this degree of confidence. Please tone down (e.g. “it is possible that…” “the sample may not be…..”)

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'