Reviewer's report

Title: Forefoot pathology in rheumatoid arthritis identified with ultrasound may not localise to areas of highest pressure: cohort observations at baseline and twelve months

Version: 1 Date: 19 October 2011

Reviewer: Heidi Siddle

Reviewer's report:

The submitted article 'Forefoot pathology in rheumatoid arthritis identified with ultrasound may not localise to areas of highest pressure: cohort observations at baseline and twelve months' is potentially useful to both clinicians and researchers in the field of rheumatology.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Control group - the participants were not matched for age, which potentially has a significant impact on the footwear worn and their gait, which may influence peak pressures. Justification for inclusion of the control group is required.

2. I am unsure of the need to follow-up patients over two time points, what benefit does this add to this observational study?

3. Footwear - how did you group footwear, what was the criteria? It is also unclear if each patient wore the same pair of shoes at baseline and follow-up, this has the potential to influence peak pressure measurement readings. Further justification is required.

4. What impact does the intermetatarsal bursal hypertrophy have on the plantar pressure? It would be interesting to compare jt synovitis, erosions, IM and SM hypertrophy individually against peak pressures which would help us understand the cause and aid treatment interventions.

Minor essential revisions

Background Pg 4

1. In the first sentence more relevant and recent references are available.

2. End of the first paragraph - where are the US detectable soft tissue pathologies?

Methods pg 7

3. First paragraph - Was DAS28-ESR carried out on the same day as the US, if not how relevant is it?

4. 2nd paragraph - Could you have used the Platto Structural Index?

5. Final paragraph - Responses to LFIS are true or not true, minimally important clinical differences scores have not been established for the LFIS yet.
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.