Reviewer’s report

Title: High levels of anxiety and depression in patients with serious diabetic foot problems

Version: 1 Date: 21 June 2013

Reviewer: Charles Fox

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This project sets out to answer the interesting question:” Do people with the diagnosis of Charcot foot have higher levels of depression / anxiety than people with diabetes and no Charcot foot?” The authors have collected a large number of patients (50) with this problem and compared their scores using the HADS questionnaire with a control group of people with diabetes but without a Charcot foot. They were surprised to find much higher scores for anxiety / depression than in other published series, including a population from another large diabetic foot clinic.

Half way through the discussion section, it is revealed that the comparison group contained “a large number of patients with chronic foot ulceration” and the authors rightly conclude that this is the likely explanation for the high anxiety / depression levels in both groups. So the research question is not that stated above but rather “Do patients with chronic foot ulceration have different mental health problems if they also have a Charcot foot?”

The stereotype of a patient with Charcot foot is to be very anxious during the acute phase, when the foot may be extremely painful. However, when the foot returns to its painless, indeed anaesthetic, state people are often unconcerned about their foot and get on with walking as best they can. This is less true in women with a Charcot foot who feel self-conscious wearing unsightly boots designed to reduce the pressure of walking and hence the risk of ulceration – as demonstrated in this study.

I am not sure if it would be possible to rewrite the article to address the new research question. It really depends if there are enough data on the status of the foot ulcers present in both groups. If these happen to be matched, the comparison would be valid and all the statistics would remain unchanged. I realise that this is a huge ask but I don’t see how the “Diabetes with or without Charcot Foot” question can be addressed using this population. Of course we know that the answer to the second research question remains negative and I am afraid that this reduces the chances of publication.

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 conflicting interests