Reviewer’s report

Title: Treatment of hip/knee osteoarthritis in Dutch general practice and physical therapy practice: an observational study

Version: 1 Date: 4 March 2015

Reviewer: Kelli Allen

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting manuscript describing real-world clinical practice patterns for patients with knee and hip OA. The paper nicely describes a Stepped Care Strategy (SCS) and examines how well practice patterns match up with this strategy. There are certainly limitations to this type of study involving large health administrative datasets, but for the most part I think the authors have dealt with and acknowledged these fairly. I have the following recommendations for strengthening the paper.

Major compulsory revisions

1. The limitations section of the discussion should describe potential implications of the voluntary nature of participation in NPCD.

2. In the medical record data section, describe whether it was possible to determine that referrals to PT, dieticians and orthopedic surgeons were specifically been for OA or could have been related to other health problems. If not, this should be addressed in the limitations section of the discussion.

3. The discussion section describes NSAID use as being “lower than previous studies” and also as being potentially too high. Is this a contradiction? It is also not clear whether “NSAIDs” in the text of the results refers just to topicals shown in the tables. This should be clarified.

4. Discussion sentence starting “Since both the recurrent rate…” seems like a little bit of a leap. Consider revising or justifying the statement a bit ore.

5. Describe whether some patients’ OA-related treatments could have been “censored” by the time frame of the data set. Could some patients have had an evaluation by a GP late in the timing of the data set, and no time to have other treatments document in the period in which these data were collected registered?

6. There is a fair bit of repetition of results / discussion in the concluding paragraph. Consider removing some of this.

Minor Essential Revisions

- Last sentence of background in the abstract doesn’t seem to be a complete sentence

- Methods section of abstract, last sentence, clarify that these referrals are to PT. Same comment for 4th sentence of results section of the abstract

- Results section of abstract, describe what is included in referrals to “allied
- Do not include citations for submitted but not accepted manuscripts

**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