Reviewer's report

Title: An evaluation of seasonal variations in footwear worn by adults with inflammatory arthritis: a cross-sectional observational study using a web-based survey

Version: 1 Date: 16 June 2014

Reviewer: Anita Williams

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for asking me to review this interesting paper. There are several aspects that need revision though they are all minor.

Background - line 3 spelling - should read 'systemic' not systematic.

Link the last two sentences of first paragraph after (3) to Previous studies - perhaps insert '.....despite....'.

Method - 2nd line insert 'were' between who and identified. I think there needs to be some discussion around the potential for bias (adding to discussion section) in relation to the respondents being those who can access emails - perhaps some discussion around alternative methods of recruitment ie directly through clinical sites or through a paper version being available to those who wish to participate. Your sample was therefore a convenience sample of the whole population. How were the questions for the survey formulated? This needs adding to the method (was it consensus of experts for instance?) This also applies to the results in table 4 as it would be useful to know where these questions have come from - needs adding to method to ensure credibility.

How was the data transferred from survey monkey to SPSS? and why was this needed when you only used descriptive statistics? Did you intend to do correlations and associations?

Discussion

if you were to do the study again would you include questions related to temperature/heat/breathability?

The fact that participants chose sandals in the summer is no surprise. However, the lack of use of the therapeutic footwear and the use of slippers needs commenting on in relation to falls

Sandals can be supportive and you mention this in your conclusion. A recommendation could be that manufacturers of both retail an high street footwear need to consider good designs that have either a method of fixing foot orthoses inside or that have an orthotic element( arch support / wedged heel).

Also you need to add what is crucial to practice - what would a clinican do differently after reading your paper?
Conclusion

4th sentence - People choose sandals to accommodate forefoot pain, impairment and disability should read ‘accommodate forefoot deformity and associated pain....’ However although heat is a major factor it is not mentioned and needs to be commented on.

references
12 is incomplete
28 not a reference (move the hyperlink to method)

Table 1 - systemic scleroderma - change to systemic sclerosis
Table 2 - under the therapeutic shoe where participants report ‘never’ change to N/A

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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'