Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying the primary outcome for a randomised controlled trial in rheumatoid arthritis: the role of a discrete choice experiment

Version: 0 Date: 13 Aug 2017

Reviewer: Keith Rome

Reviewer's report:

I would like to thank the authors for submitting the manuscript. However, there are unfortunately a number of issues with the current manuscript.

Major Revisions

In the introduction it is difficult to ascertain the aim or objective of the work. I have assumed it is on page 4, line 85: "In this study we used a DCE to assess the relative importance of different outcomes, as well as the nature and schedule of the intervention, when assessing gait rehabilitation interventions for patients with early RA of the foot and ankle." Is the health and fitness intervention gait rehabilitation? And the target audience is people with early RA?

The abstract states the outcomes were based upon literature review, clinician recommendation and patient's focus group (page 2, line 18). There is a need for further information about the literature review in terms of such terms, databased used.

Page 7, line 161: please name the clinicians and stakeholder groups.

Page 7, line 165: Did the authors use a research methodology to explore the different attributes from the focus groups?

Page 7, line 158: Five attributes are described but in Table 1 there is an additional attribute: health and fitness intervention - exercise supervised by a physiotherapist or podiatrist. It is unclear of the additional attribute and needs to be described in the methodology.

Page 8, line 169: please can you explain to the audience 3^5*4=972 profiles. The explanation of the D-design to the target audience needs to be more clearly explained. The target audience for this journal is primarily clinicians.

Page 8, line 186: please name Market Company. I am unclear of the 100 people with RA. What criteria did the marketing company used? Is the study related to early RA or just people with RA? Information about disease duration was stated (page 8, line 191) but not described in results.
Page 9, line 199-217: please can re-word the data analysis for the target audience for Journal of Foot and Ankle Research.

Page 10; Table 2: According to the Arthritis Foundation, about 1.5 million Americans have RA, and three times as many women as men are affected by the disease. However, in the current findings only 51% were females?

Page 11, line 266; Table 4 relates to goodness of fit and not the coefficients.

Tables 3 and 5 are very difficult to interpret and the explanation of the findings in the results section are very difficult to follow. Please remember the target audience.

Minor Revisions

In Table 2: remove 16-24 and replace with 18-24 year old. The criteria states over 18 years old.

Please label tables in a logical and sequential manner.

Please replace patients with RA with people with RA.

Please state two or three decimal points not both

Check references are correctly quoted.

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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