Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluation of a simple tool to assess the results of Ponseti treatment for use by clubfoot therapists: a diagnostic accuracy study

Version: 0 Date: 04 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Angela Margaret Evans

Reviewer's report:

Dear Authors

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript.

The development of a simple tool for clubfoot assessment post treatment that is quick, low-cost, repeatable and relevant is indeed helpful.

The development of the ACT tool is pragmatic and purposeful, and importantly includes parent rating as well as foot features and shoe use.

Overall the paper is well thought through and the study was well designed.

However, there is need for greater clarity regarding the 31% follow up rate and implications - this must be transparent and included in the abstract.

Similarly the development was only based on opinion from 35 Ponseti trainers in Africa (the limitations of Delphi)

Likewise, these effects on the external validity and hence the *preliminary and limited findings of this study* need to be more effectively communicated.

I do not see this as preclusive of publication at all; on the contrary, I think this paper should be published but must make very clear its limitations and drive further work in this area.

The ACT tool looks promising from all perspectives, but this paper needs to be very frank about the low follow up rate, one country setting, and implications of not including 69% of the initial cohort.

I am not sure about the PedsQL or healthcare satisfaction results as additional Files 3 and 4 were not included in those I received?
I will be happy to receive these an comment further..

Table 3: please correct recruitment numbers, 83+107+20 = 210; 8 less than 218 total, so not 100%.
Missing cases must be regarded as failed
- error in 3rd column from right - 50%

Please temper results re sensitivity/specificity, with comment such as: 'given the small sample...'

Table 6 is important but needs to be clearer, and the use of % given many n<10 results is a little misleading.

May I suggest amending the title:

'Preliminary evaluation of a simple tool for the assessment of Ponseti treatment outcomes by non-medical personnel in low income settings'

- and then please review and slightly re-frame the discussion to balance both the importance of the tool, and the qualified findings.

I am happy to review again, or comment further.

Well done with this important initiative.

**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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