Reviewer’s report

Title: Management of musculoskeletal foot and ankle conditions prior to public-sector orthopaedic referral in South Australia

Version: 0 Date: 31 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Matt Carroll

Reviewer's report:

Thank you to the authors for the submission of a well-constructed manuscript.

Study participants

1. Could you please clarify the definition of responders and non-responders, or those who participated and those who did not? I am confused as to why data from non-responders was included. In the recruitment section you state a returned survey implied consent but in your data analysis section you state "SED were not normally distributed in those that did and did not respond to the survey". Therefore was data included/reported derived from participants who did not respond and therefore did not consent? In the results section titled "study participants" you report results comparing those who participated and non-responders again this emphasises this issue, if they did not participate in the survey they did not consent, therefore should the data be included.

Discussion

2. Just a minor point on flow of the discussion. Currently the discussion details foot pain, then patient expectations and finally management prior to surgery. I would suggest a rearrangement of the discussion to flow with the aims stated in the introduction.

A. Discussion of how patients are managed prior to referral for surgery.

B. Quantifying foot and ankle pain

C. Patient expectations

3. With regard to foot pain is it possible to elaborate on specific locations of foot pain and the relationship to BMI, being that mannequins were used to detail pain location is higher BMI associated with pain to the forefoot/1st MPJ? Just a question as currently foot pain is described non-specifically.

4. The sentence "It may also be due to the design of the health system which enables unfettered access to medical practitioners, but a more convoluted and constrained access to AHPs, especially for people without private health insurance and limited disposable income" requires a
The authors have contextual knowledge of the Australian health system but readers from other countries do not have context. Consideration should be given to explaining this sentence in more detail to demonstrate the barriers or consider deletion.

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