Reviewer’s report

Title: WORK PARTICIPATION, MOBILITY AND FOOT SYMPTOMS IN PEOPLE WITH SYSTEMIC LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS: FINDINGS OF A UK NATIONAL SURVEY

Version: 0 Date: 08 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Sarah Stewart

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper which presents the results of a survey of 182 participants with SLE which investigated the association between foot problems and employment status. Overall, the paper was well-written. The introduction provided a sufficient justification for the study as well as a succinct background to SLE in relation to work disability and foot problems. The discussion was also very well written. I have a number of points for the authors to consider which deal mainly with the methods and results sections of the paper:

1. Abstract, Conclusion: this is not a substantial conclusion. It is a sentence presenting a new result. Please provide a summary of the main findings and perhaps include a sentence on the clinical implications.


3. Methods, study design: I think the authors need to be clear that this paper is a sub-analysis of part of a larger survey study that has been previously published. I could not see that the current study aims were pre-specified in the protocol referenced here. If they were, this needs to be stated here.

4. Results, first paragraph: In comparing the demographic details between those who were included and those who were excluded from the analysis can you please include the actual mean values (alongside the p-values) for age, ethnicity, disease duration and BMI.

5. Results, paragraph three: Please include an additional Table to present the demographic and disease characteristics of your participant population with the p-values showing the comparisons between the 'employed' and 'unemployed due to foot problems' groups. Currently all that is shown is the P-values for ethnicity, BMI, disease duration and age. Please also include gender in this table. This Table should be labelled Table 1, and the current Table 1 should be Table 2.
6. Results, paragraph three, final sentence: please include the p-value post-adjustment for disease duration.

7. Results Table: please include the odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals in the table alongside the n, %, and p-values for each group. Also include the mean difference and 95% confidence intervals alongside the p-values for the MFPDI results in this table.

8. Results, final paragraph: it is not clear whether Table 1 includes the age-adjusted results or the non-adjusted results for the differences in MFPDI between the groups. If the results in Table 1 are adjusted for age please include a footnote in the Table to state this. If not, then please include the confidence intervals and p-values for the adjusted model in this paragraph.

9. There are a number of phrases used to refer to the participant group who were unemployed due to foot problems. Some of the phrases do not read well in the context of the sentence they are in (e.g. "long term sick or retired", "work disable", "work absent") which can be confusing at times to the reader. Could you be consistent in the label used to refer to this group and make sure it is defined at first use (i.e. in methods section of paper).

I also have a number of minor edits/grammar/spelling changes for the authors to consider:

Abstract

1. Please note that this is called an "Abstract", not a "Summary" - please refer to JFAR author guidelines for correct headings.

2. Results, first sentence: add a comma after "In total".

3. Results, second sentence: change the ',' after "…due to foot symptoms" to a '.' and start a new sentence: "The remaining were retired…"

4. Results, last sentence: change "disability scores" to "foot disability scores"

Introduction

5. Paragraph one, first sentence: change "granting" to "as it grants"

6. Remove the abbreviation "MSK". This abbreviation has not been used anywhere else in the manuscript and is therefore not needed.
7. Paragraph one, last sentence: remove extra full stop from end of sentence.

8. Paragraph two, first sentence: change "…reporting rates of work disability of 32.5%" to "…reporting rates of work disability in 32.5%".

9. Paragraph two, last sentence: change "…causes of work non-participation in SLE" to "…causes of work non-participation in people with SLE"

10. Paragraph three: second sentence: currently this sentence reads that references 5 to 8 all report that 61% of people with SLE had foot pain?

11. Paragraph three, last sentence: change "…in this patient group" to "…in people with SLE".

Methods

12. Participants section, first sentence: no need to redefine the abbreviation "SLE".

13. Outcome measures section, first sentence: change "The survey also had imbedded the Manchester…” to "The survey also included the Manchester…”

14. Analysis section, last sentence: "…of being in work as opposed to being long term sick or retired..". The phrase 'long term sick' does not read well. Please see my previous comment about labelling the groups in a clear way. Also should this not be "retired early" to avoid confusion between those who retired at a normal age who were excluded from the analysis.

15. Analysis section: You have a total of 13 variables related to foot symptoms (not including the MFPDI scores) and some of these comparisons have very small sample sizes. Why did you not use a Bonferroni adjusted p-value to account for this multiplicity?

Discussion

16. First paragraph, second sentence: change "Moreover, comparison of those…” to "Moreover, comparison to those…”

17. First paragraph, final sentence: change "…and poor mobility/difficulty walking, with associations robust to adjustment for age" to "…and poor mobility/difficulty walking, even after adjustment for age".
18. Paragraph two, sentence four: change "In consequence…" to "Consequently…"

19. Paragraph two, sentence six: remove the word "available" from the end of this sentence.

20. Please move paragraph two (which discusses the strengths and limitations of the study) to the end of the discussion section, before the conclusion.

Conclusion

21. Rather than ending the conclusion with "although further prospective research is recommended" consider finishing reference to the clinical implications/importance of your findings.

General

22. Please check the referencing style is consistent with JFAR author guidelines

23. Numbers at beginning of sentences should not begin with numerical values. Please review manuscript and correct throughout. Some examples include:

* The second sentence of the Results section of the Abstract: instead of "79", it should read "Seventy-nine".

* The first sentence in the Conclusion section of the Abstract: instead of "29%", it should read "Twenty-nine percent".

* The first sentence in the Results section: instead of "182", it should read "One hundred and eighty-two".

* Second sentence of Results section: instead of "71/182", it could read "Of the 182 responders, 71 were excluded…"

* Please review the remaining manuscript and correct throughout.

Level of interest

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of limited interest
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal