Reviewer’s report

Title: An Exploratory Qualitative Study of Health Professional Perspectives on Clinical Outcomes in UK Orthotic Practice

Version: 0 Date: 23 May 2020

Reviewer: Lara Chapman

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting article that provides novel insight into current use of outcome measures amongst orthotic service professionals. The need for this study is well justified and the findings provide much needed understanding regarding outcomes of importance in orthotic services, and barriers to measuring outcomes in practice. I have some suggestions for revision, should the authors kindly consider these.

Abstract

Specific comments

Page 2, line 19 - Would it be more accurate to state that an initial advisory group involving experts in the field was assembled, rather than conducted?

Page 2, line 31 - Could the authors refer specifically to the collection of outcome measures or outcome data here rather than simply "data"?

Background

Specific comments

Page 4, lines 11-13 - Could the authors rephrase "orthotic services" to "orthotic devices" or "orthotic interventions"?

Page 4 line 19 - Consider removing "therefore" at the start of this sentence; it reads like a separate point.

Page 4, line 23 - There is a number 6 in superscript at the start of this line. Does this refer to reference 6 or is it a typo?

Page 4, line 44 - Typo - "that that".

Page 4, line 48 - This reference seems out of place in backing up this statement, could the authors check the referencing is correct?
Page 4, lines 46-50 - Could the authors reword this sentence to reflect that it is an outcome measurement instrument or tool that is administered rather than an outcome? Additionally, the acronym "OM" is used throughout this paper but it is not defined at any point. Perhaps it could be defined here if the authors are using "OM" to refer to the term "outcome measurement" or within the last sentence of the background (page 4, line 60) if the authors are using "OM" to refer to "outcome measure". The latter seems more appropriate.

Page 4, lines 52-56 - This sentence is confusing, could it be reworded?

Page 4, line 60 - Could this be reworded to "outcome measure" rather than "outcomes measure" (or changed to OM here, as per previous suggestion).

Method

General comments

Could the methods be split into different subsections for clarity, e.g. ethics, participants, recruitment, data collection, analysis? At present, this section does not always flow logically.

Specific comments

Page 5, lines 12-26 - There is continued use of "the researcher" within this paragraph. Consider rewording e.g. "an interpretivist approach was taken…" and "field notes on decision making…(etc)…were maintained."

Page 5, lines 30-34 - Would it be possible for the focus group topic guide to be included as a supplementary file to provide insight into the questions that were asked? Were these questions piloted?

Page 5, line 34 - Could the authors clarify what is meant by the statement "confirmed the results"?

Page 5, lines 42-44 - Could the authors reword "invited to participate by email invitation including participant information" for clarity, e.g. "Potential participants were provided with written information about the study." Were all current members of NOMAG emailed, and if so, how many?

Page 5, line 44 - Could the information relating to how many participants were recruited be moved to the first line of the results with added info about how many potential participants responded to the email and expressed an interest in taking part initially (and then dropped out - if any?).

Page 5, line 55 - Could further information be added about the focus group, e.g. was it conducted by the same member of the research team who took the field notes, or were two members of the research team present? Perhaps initials of the researchers involved could be provided in brackets to clarify who did what. Also, could further information about the setting of the focus group be
provided - e.g. was it face-to-face? Where did it take place (in a hospital? And in which geographic region?), and when was this data collected?

Page 5, line 57 - This sentence about semi-structured questions seems out of place in this paragraph. Perhaps it could be moved to earlier on in the methods, in a section about the topic guide?

Page 6, lines 5-9 - This paragraph does not provide much information about how the analysis was carried out. Could the steps of thematic analysis be described in more detail? Could the authors also confirm if this was an inductive approach, and whether any software was used during analysis?

Page 6, line 9 - Could the authors provide further clarity regarding the term "repeated analysis" - who was involved and what did they do? Also, could the authors add information about the verbatim quotes used throughout the results section, including the reasons for extracting these in relation to rigour?

Results

General comments

The use of the word "and" following each quote seems unnecessary.

It would be interesting to see how the themes interlink pictorially.

Specific comments

Page 6, lines 16-18 - Could the authors move the information about the collection of demographic information to the methods section of this paper?

Page 6, Table 1 - Perhaps the raw data in the final two columns of this table could go into supplementary data, and an overview could be provided instead, e.g. % of participants stating outcomes were relevant to orthotic practice.

Page 6, Table 1 - No information is provided with regards to which regions the participants work in or how many different NHS Trusts are represented - consider providing this information for a richer insight.

Page 6, Table 1 - Instead of "blank" could something like "NP" be written to mean "not provided"? At the bottom of the table, please provide definitions of each acronym (e.g. VAS, GAS, TUAG, NRS). Also, please note that MFPI is incorrect - it is MFPDI (assuming this means the Manchester Foot Pain & Disability Index).

Page 6, Table 1 and Table 2 - The use of punctuation is inconsistent throughout these tables e.g. with job titles and titles of subthemes.
Page 9, line 5 - Is there a word missing after confirmed?

Page 10, lines 45-48 - Could quotes be provided to demonstrate this point?

Page 11, lines 18-20 - This sentence is confusing, consider restructuring it.

Page 12, line 2 - Could agree be changed to agreed, for tense consistency?

Page 12, line 27 - Please remove the full stop that appears after "day to day".

Page 16, line 1 - Could this be rephrased to "delegation of measuring outcomes" for clarity?

Page 16, lines 58-60 - Consider using the acronym PROMs here as it has already been defined.

Discussion

General comments

There is a lot of background information on outcome measures in the discussion (particularly on page 17, after the first paragraph) which seems out of place. This info could be introduced in the background section of the study and recapped in the discussion, but as it stands this is all new information to the reader and some of it is not framed in the context of the results.

Could the authors refer to key points in the background of this study such as why it is important to measure outcomes in practice, the lack of evidence relating to outcomes of orthotic care in the UK, and the fact that outcome data for orthotic interventions is not being routinely collected by orthotists - and then discuss how the results from this study have provided new insight (with reference to the study's aims)?

Specific comments

Page 17, line 48 - References 18 and 19 are identical in the reference list.

Page 18, lines 14-16 - "Most patients will invariably hold some expectations" - consider rewording for clarity as the words "most", "invariably" and "some" conflict.

Page 18, line 16 - There is a number 24 in superscript. Does this refer to reference 24?

Page 18, line 26 onwards - When discussing management of chronic diseases, could the authors refer to a point they made in the background of this paper - that collecting outcome data for orthotic interventions can be a complex task due to the wide range of medical conditions that would require specific outcome measurement tools within orthotic services (reference 9).
Page 20, line 1 - There is nothing presented in the results section about orthoses impacting on clothing choice. Could a different or additional verbatim quote be presented in the results section to represent this finding?

Page 20, lines 14-32 - This paragraph introduces a lot of studies. Perhaps this could all be summarised by stating that previous studies [16, 44-45] within other areas of allied health similarly found that training and education contributed to routine use of OMs in practice.

Page 20, line 14 - Could the authors rephrase "the use of outcome tool use" for clarity?

Page 20, line 14 and lines 42-44 - Could the description of this reference be changed to Jette et al. rather than including the names of all authors?

Page 21, lines 6-8 - Could this be rephrased to "with the opinions of the participants in the current study" for clarity?

Page 21, line 35 - Could "meant some progress" be rephrased to "led to some progress" for clarity?

Page 21, lines 50-52 - Typos - "practitioners opinions" should be "practitioners' opinions" and "OM" should be "OMs".

Page 21, line 61 - Could this sentence be rephrased in terms of transferability of the findings to the wider orthotic practitioner population? And instead of "low numbers", perhaps the authors could refer to sample size. However, I feel that the potential limitation is the fact that there was only one focus group, rather than the actual sample size, and potentially the limited geographic representation (if this was the case). Perhaps some information about rigour could be added here, e.g. data saturation, and some discussion around whether one focus group was enough.

Page 22, lines 9-13 - The statement relating to future research is currently quite broad. Could the authors expand more on suggestions for future research? This study has focussed on exploring what outcomes are important amongst practitioners. Perhaps it would be interesting to explore what outcomes are important to orthotics patients - and between patients with different conditions using these services? Patients' perspectives of important outcomes could differ from orthotic practitioners' perspectives. This strongly links with findings in Theme 1 of the results too - priorities differ between health professionals and patients, and it would be interesting to discuss this earlier in this section - particularly in relation to shared decision making.

Page 22, lines 23-25 - Could this sentence be reworded or split into two sentences to avoid repeated use of the word "but"?

Page 22, line 33 - There is an "s" missing from the end of OM.

Thank you again for submitting this interesting and much needed research.
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:

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