Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 29 May 2020

Reviewer: Matthew Cotchett

Reviewer's report:

Thanks for the opportunity to review this study. It is most enjoyable reading any study that reinforces the importance of patient education and recognising behaviour change. I have a few comments for the authors to consider.

Aim
Can the authors clarify the aim of the study? One aim was to explore 'relevant outcomes' in the field of orthotics but what does this mean? Can the authors elaborate on this aim because I am having difficulty relating the first two themes to this specific aim. How does 'The Role of Goal Setting' relate to this aim? Are the authors trying to understand factors that influence outcomes following the prescription of orthoses, which includes a person' readiness for changes, conflicting goals etc? If so, I think it would help to be more specific about the first aim.

Definition of an orthosis
Upon reading this study, I was under the impression that the term 'orthotic' was being used to describe an insert for a shoe, particularly given that this is a foot and ankle related journal. However, I then realised on page 8, that the authors are referring to all types of orthoses. Can I suggest that the authors provide a definition and the type of orthoses that will be discussed in this study (in the Introduction section). I think most readers would automatically assume that you are referring to foot orthoses.

Methods
It would have been useful for the authors to follow the COREQ guidelines for the reporting of the methods and results. Can I ask that the authors complete this checklist and identify any gaps. For example:

1. Was a relationship established between the researcher and the participants prior to study commencement? If so, did this relationship have the potential to influence the responses of participants? It appears that the researcher selected participants based on their knowledge of whether they used outcome measures. How did the researcher know this and might it have influenced the questions asked and responses received?

2. Further characteristics of the sample: I would be interested to know the number of orthoses prescribed by each participant on a monthly basis. This might provide background to the expertise of the participants in the field of orthotic therapy.
3. Interview guide: can the authors provide a list of questions that were asked by the lead researcher?

4. Interview duration: What was the duration of the focus group?

5. Data coding: how many people coded the data?

6. Member checking: Was the transcript returned to participants for comment?

7. Software: if applicable, was software used to manage the data?

Discussion
I found the first few paragraphs a little difficult to follow as information was not presented in the order in which the aims and themes were presented. The first paragraph of the Discussion does not address the 'first' aim but rather focuses on the findings related to outcome measures. The authors then move into a discussion about the meaning of health; then into types of outcomes; and then address issues with the 'first' aim in the fourth paragraph. Can I suggest that the first paragraph addresses the two aims that were presented in the Introduction? From there, the authors can highlight the key themes associated with each aim and provide meaning and their understanding of the themes.

The Discussion is quite long, although it was an enjoyable read. Could I suggest that if the length of the Discussion stays as is, then the use of subheadings might be considered - perhaps using headings guided by the key themes.

Minor issues
P12, line 26/27: remove the full stop
P12, line 45/46: should be of, not off
P17, QoL: spell in full
P18, Citation 18 in an incorrect format
P20, line 1: 'on the impact' has been written twice

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