Reviewer’s report

Title: Lived experience and attitudes of people with plantar heel pain: a qualitative exploration

Version: 0 Date: 09 Dec 2019

Reviewer: Anita Williams

Reviewer's report:

First, I would like to thank all the authors for this interesting study. The work reflects those challenges that patients have in relation to the management of PF (as often observed in clinical practice) but also provides insight into the effects of living with PF in the patients own world. This insight certainly contributes to the need for educational material and also alignment to the practitioners approach to the evidence based management.

Overall the paper is well written and adheres to the convention for qualitative research methods of data collection, analysis and reporting of results. You provide good justification for the study in the background section.

I think there are a few aspects that could be developed a little further (which could add value to the discussion and also the importance of this work) and some minor amendments.

Background - is there any epidemiological data on the scale of PF, MSK foot problems (of which PF could be included). Likewise, any data on absence from work or presenteesism?

Line 108 change 'frame' for 'framework'.

Line 114 you mention exclusions as being tumors, infections or fractures. Did you identify any of these? If you did can you state what you did with these people who were excluded. If there were none please state that also. (mention in the results).

Line 123 question development - you have used literature to inform the questions and these were discussed with all authors. You all have a good number of years of clinical experience so rather than discussion on the literature did you draw on your own experiences of what patients might need? If so can you add this as I think it shows that significant expertise was drawn upon to inform the questions. It is not introducing bias but being clear about the process.

Line 425 'treating' is an incorrect word. Replace with 'who have' or 'who live with'.

Lines 435-6 Please make reference to behaviour change theory. It is clear that patients try various treatments but maybe they don't engage long enough of the treatment to take effect. There is a need for patients to apply the appropriate intervention for the correct duration of engagement to achieve maximum health benefits.

Lines 444-6 I think it is important to comment on the need for the practitioners approach to be consistent as some patients see various podiatrists and a number of practitioners from GP to physio to podiatrist - though not necessarily in that order! You can add a commentary/recommendation as to how this could be achieved e.g who should be the first point of contact/should info be on professional body web sites so that info is 'endorsed'.
The discussion is good and raises some interesting points. What are your recommendations for future research? Are you going on to develop the educational material and then evaluate it?

Is there any literature from any other areas that patient education leads to health behaviour change/better engagement in treatments and hence better outcomes as this would set the scheme for possible future work and adds to the importance of this work.

Do you have any recommendations for practice? There is an indication from your results that there needs to be consistency of the practitioners approach (holistic) and hence interventions/ advice are only as good as the consultation.

Supplementary material provides good information should the reader wish to read further - please correct typo table 2 'Broken'.

Again, thanks for this well designed and much needed research.

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