Reviewer's report

Title: Living with osteoarthritis is a balancing act: An exploration of patients' beliefs about knee pain

Version: 0 Date: 30 Dec 2017

Reviewer: Ricardo Ferreira

Reviewer's report:

Dear Editor,

Dear Authors,

This manuscript is one of the best qualitative manuscripts I have ever read. The introduction is concise, clear and in its last paragraph explains why this research is needed, i.e. what it adds to previous studies. The methods are very well explained and detailed (the more distinct part compared to similar papers). The results have a good balance between descriptions and inclusion of participant's quotes, presenting a logical sequence of the phenomenon. The appendixes well support the analysis. The discussion is also well balanced.

I have, however, some comments/ suggestions for improvement:

1) The abstract could probably be improved to better represent the very good quality of the manuscript. The first time I read it, it was difficult to completely understand the results, which could be related to the long sentences. I'm unsure if the conclusion couldn't be more concise with some information from it being moved to results. These are only potential ways to globally improve the manuscript. The methods could also include other information, more important than "where" patients were recruited, for instance regarding data analysis.

2) It is not clear to me what does the "Negative case analysis" (P5, L16) mean. Could this be better explained?
3) It's good to see that the research team included academics and clinicians with different backgrounds. It would have been even better if "Patient research partners" have been included as well. This is even more important because the authors did not validate the findings with the participants (P6L5). This should be mentioned as a limitation (P14).

4) I would have liked a little better explanation of why the third theme ("Health System Support") deserve a distinct publication. The authors are transparent referring this, which is positive but maybe with one sentence or with one example, this decision could be more clear for the reader. I do understand that it is difficult to present too many results in a qualitative study (as well as in a quantitative one).

5) Both in the abstract and in the results two themes are presented, without sub-themes headings. However, two sub-themes are presented in the additional files 1 and 2 for each theme. Why? Could these sub-themes be presented also in the main text?

Some minor points:

P4 L13 - The author's use the term "Purposive sampling"; may the terms "intentional" or "selective" be easier to understand by the potential readers?

P8 L18 - The authors refer that "Only two participants attributed their success in managing OA to specific weight management or exercise regimes". Couldn't the 2 fictitious names be stated? the reader could then look their characteristics in table 2 and, for instance, look at their background.

P13 L14-18. Could the punctuation be revised in this long sentence?

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.
Yes
**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.
Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.
Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.
Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:
Acceptable

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