Reviewer’s report

Title: Gout and Sexual Function: Patient Perspective of how gout affects personal relationships and Intimacy

Version: 0 Date: 30 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Anne O'Brien

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Gout and Sexual Function: Patient Perspective of how gout affects personal relationships and Intimacy

The title could include location / country of study - Alabama, USA

Thank you for the opportunity to review this potentially important topic of study which should be of interest to the readership. This is in my view a worthy study, but at present requires more detail to clarify methodology particularly. I hope the comments and related suggestions included are read as intended to be constructive to enhance the potential for future publication.

Abstract:

* The study objective doesn't tie with results which only reports concerns - both should match so results need to state, yes relationship and intimacy issues are (universally?) reported by participants. if not balance the results, stating not all.

* Results could be summarised more distinctly; demographics of age, gender, marital status and current medication are currently all mixed up.

Intro: Rephrase "in other words" - not appropriate in an academic journal

Methods / Sample:

* More detail needed; were consecutive patients invited, how was gender balanced etc?

* "oversampled" - would benefit from rephrasing

* $30 check - for international audience rephrase to "payment"?

* Clarify (for international audience) was the IRB an ethical review board?
* NGT, "sessions" (what is meant by this? - worth rephrasing) and analyses -

* This section would benefit from being broken up into separate paragraphs to aid clarity.

* Some further justification of the choice of NGT as a methodology is needed; usually this method is used to promote full group participation, discussion of problems (stated by authors), and identification of solutions (not stated by authors nor asked for by simply posing one study question to participants) that are then prioritised via consensus.

* Avoid "we" finalized.. etc

* Don't start a sentence with "Except" the second… rephrase

* What type of recording.. written/ audio etc?

* If the question was "How has gout affected your relationships? (think of relationship with your spouse, boy/girl-friend or significant other including the effect of gout on intimacy)", were sub-questions employed to then explore possible solutions to the prioritised problems?. If so, this has not been stated in the methods section.

* Might a figure (flow diagram) be useful illustrating some of the method used and discrete steps of the NGT?

* Pg 5 talks about "solutions generated" but this has not been mentioned as part of the research question…

*Authors should justify why groups were separated by gender (apart from the 2nd group)? Was this an aim of the study to explore gender differences? - were the mixed group responses different from the uni-sex groups?

* How was "saturation" defined and agreed? - this has not been discussed in the methods at all. Is the term appropriate in a NGT method when participants continue discussions until consensus is agreed?

* What form of data analysis was used; How were themes discussed/ agreed by the research team? As results are presented this becomes more important to justify but this is currently omitted by the authors.
Results

* Not easy to read as written..(A-H) data are not summarised, but almost seem to be reported as raw data - briefer summaries and illustrative participant quotes to be included to summarise themes would rectify this.

* It would be worth stating how many of the 44 participants overall reported that intimacy had been affected in some way or other by their gout (or emphasising only very few appear to be unaffected)

* Overall the themes identified do not all appear to be related to intimacy issues as presented, so some consideration of rewording these would be beneficial for the reader.

* Unfortunately the numbers in brackets are not helpful.. e.g. (1) etc. bullet points may be more helpful but these themes should be presented and summarised in an easier to read format.

* A2 - (3) spouse wasn't aggressive towards intimacy due to their gout; what does this mean?

* E - diet/ food choices- a link needs to be made between this reported finding and intimacy.

* "H - Not in a relationship currently/ No or positive effect

* Three of the 14 nominal groups ranked this among the top 5 concerns… " - this is not clear; are participants concern that they are not in a relationship because of their gout?.. This is completely different however from saying that their gout has no effect.. which is completely different from saying a positive effect [on intimacy] (which doesn't appear to be reported anywhere)

* Might it be clearer to refer to patient gender, rather than patient sex as the topic being discussed is intimacy? - p 10

* The paragraph "Effect of patient sex on concerns" is confusing to read.. may be clearer if the author incorporated these data into the previous paragraphs focusing on themes.

* Figure 1 is helpful - could these data be broken down further to reflect gender differences in top concerns? so the bar could be split by colour to reflect M:F views?

* Table 1 Title - .... "for the intimacy question" implies there were other questions.. if so, this should be explicit in the methods and this study put in the context of a bigger one.
* Some of the data in Table 1 could be presented in a bar chart figure differentiating gender, some included within the text or represented differently.

Discussion:

This section would benefit and be enhanced by some comparisons with other rheumatic conditions where effect on intimacy has been reported. The author has made further study recommendations and discussed some limitations of the current study, but if data have been analysed by one single researcher only (as suggested) this is a significant omission as a limitation.

Conclusion: A useful summary.

Whilst generally well written, there are typographical and grammatical errors that need correction throughout.

I hope the author is able to address comments to enable a future publication.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

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

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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