Reviewer’s report

Title: Protocol for a systematic review and thematic synthesis of patient experiences of central venous access devices in anti-cancer treatment

Version: 0 Date: 01 Jan 2018

Reviewer: Ben Verboom

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-articulated protocol for an important piece of research.

The review questions are specific and well thought out, and the protocol is thorough in most areas. I provide a few minor discretionary suggestions below.

On page 8, line 177 please provide the relevant citation of the PRISMA statement when referring to the planned flow diagram.

p.9, line 192: in addition to extracting the results sections of qualitative papers, it's worth considering also extracting the discussion sections. This will add to the workload, since it creates more data to code, but is likely to yield useful data in the form of second-order (i.e., original primary study author) interpretations (e.g., themes, concepts, metaphors) of the phenomena of interest.

p.11 Note the typo on line 232

p.13 The CERQual tool is relatively new, and some of the concepts involved in assessing certainty in findings (particularly 'coherence' and 'adequacy') may not be well understood to many readers of Systematic Reviews journal, particularly those not steeped in qualitative research/synthesis. Moreover, as you'll know from reading the Lewin et al paper on the CERQual tool [ref 15 in your manuscript] operationalization and application of the four components of CERQual is not prescribed by the tool, but rather is very open to interpretation and adaptation by review authors according to their specific review needs. Therefore, it may informative for readers if you elaborate further in the protocol on how you define each of the four components and, equally importantly, how you plan to apply these criteria (e.g., decision rules, a clear statement that judgments will be heavily subjective, etc.). You should also note whether two or more review authors will be involved in the CERQual assessments, and if not, this should be noted as a limitation. [An example of how a team I work with wrote up our plans to apply CERQual in a review also using Thomas and Harden’s thematic synthesis can be found in this journal (Verboom et al., 2016; https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-016-0240-6)].
Many thanks for the opportunity to review this paper. Best wishes with the review!

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An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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