Author's response to reviews

Title: The assessment of the quality of reporting of meta-analyses in diagnostic research: a systematic review.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
The Editor,

BMC Medical Research Methodology,

Dear Sir/Madam

**MS: 1301903416495877: The assessment of the quality of reporting of meta-analyses in diagnostic research: a systematic review.**

We would like to thank the reviewers for their comments and are grateful to be given the opportunity to respond to them. We hope this will improve the readability and quality of the resubmitted manuscript.

Our responses to the reviewers’ comments are given below. Note further references, figures and appendices have been included in direct response to the reviewer comments.

Yours faithfully,

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Response to Erik von Elm

Major
1. This has been added to the limitations, although we have emphasised that it is our interpretation on some key references on systematic reviews.

2. This has now been done and an additional figure (2) has been inserted illustrating the number of meta-analyses included per year of publication.

3. The reviewer is correct to point out that the HTA reports could be a potential confounding influence and we thank him for this observation. A sensitivity analysis has been done and a description included in the analysis. Exclusion of the HTA reports did not affect the significance of the results. A figure has been inserted illustrating the results of the sensitivity analysis.

4. These figures have been amended.

Minor
1. This has been amended.

2. This has been amended.

3. Both the abstract and the methods have been amended accordingly.

4. These have been re-written.

5. This has been amended accordingly.

6. The word ‘last’ has been replaced with ‘previous’ to clarify the meaning. Note the only restriction on searches was an upper cut off date of the 31st December 2008. There was no lower limit imposed, although we did anticipate studies published earlier than 2000 were unlikely to fulfill the inclusion criteria: this was borne out by the results.

7. We are aware of the earlier publication, but the development of the QUADAS tool was an NHS HTA commissioned piece of research. The corresponding HTA report is the definitive account on the development of QUADAS and is therefore, the most appropriate reference.

8. The figure has been amended in accordance with the suggestion.

9. The few unfortunate typos have been amended. The grammar of the manuscript is correct.

Discretionary changes:
1. Some percentages have been added.

2. This has been retained
Response to Penny Whiting

Discretionary changes:

‘I found use of the term "study" to refer to reviews confusing. I think it would be clearer to use the term "review" or "meta-analysis" throughout when referring to such studies.’

The term review is now used instead of study

‘Abstract: I found the phrases "bias across studies(methods)", "bias across studies (results)" unclear’

These have been expanded upon

‘Methods: Study Selection, First sentence – extra “then” in this sentence?’

This has been amended.

‘Figure: “step 1” unclear’

We think this is clear from the text and have not changed it