Reviewer's report

Title: The Global Evidence Mapping Initiative: Scoping research in broad topic areas

Version: 5 Date: 15 April 2011

Reviewer: marcel dijkers

Reviewer's report:

The authors have been responsive to my comments, and I have a few minor points, and a suggestion. If it would have been possible to include these in reviews 1 or 2, but I failed to do so, I apologize.

PICO: while the authors make clear that non-intervention questions were welcome, the specification of PICO and a number of other phrases describing the methodology suggests that non-intervention issues got short shrift in the process. As the publication of this paper may drive stakeholders (including myself) to the GEM website to check out the maps, it may behoove the authors to comment in the discussion section on this issue. I realize that in this paper they are interested more in the methodology than in the specific results, but the two cannot be separated completely, and at a minimum future users of this evidence mapping methodology should be warned about the “dangers” of using PICO language.

illustrated by specific examples from our TBI rehabilitation evidence map
How about “illustrated with”. Unless the examples did the illustrating themselves.

The nominal groups technique
Google says 79,000 to 1,110 that this is “nominal group”.

Organisation of this heterogeneous data was required in order to promulgate a key aim of the GEM Initiative – the identification of evidence gaps
But then this is an aim that was not achieved – per figure 1, evidence gap analysis is an extension of evidence mapping.

Coding data according to the clinical problems described
Isn’t this simply coding the clinical problems? (And, if patients and policy makers were part of the question generating group, is it still fair to describe these problems as “clinical”?)

‘Clinical Importance’ as high AND ‘Novelty’ OR ‘Controversy’ as high or moderate.
In Boolean algebra, AND has priority over OR, so this presumably should read: “Clinical Importance’ as high AND (‘Novelty’ OR ‘Controversy’ as high or moderate)”.

As such methods are extensively documented in systematic review methodology literature, a brief description of their specific application to the GEM Initiative follows.

ONLY a brief description follows?

Where necessary, a third reviewer was used to achieve consensus. I guess it was more likely that number 3 broke a tie. If s/he indeed talked one of the disagreeable pair over to the position of the other, the language stands, of course.

were systematically kept. .

no comment

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.