Reviewer’s report

**Title:** An optimal search filter for retrieving systematic reviews and meta-analyses that evaluate the effectiveness of public health interventions

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 12 February 2012

**Reviewer:** Julie Glanville

**Reviewer’s report:**

The paper is now much clearer to read - thank you for your detailed revisions and for responding with detailed feedback to each of the reviewer's comments.

Minor essential revisions

1. There is still a lot of repetition of the objectives of the paper - once all the edits have been accepted, these will be easy to see and the repetition can be removed.

2. Introduction – what is a ‘moderate level’ of improvement?. It looks very much like any improvement in NNR was desired – this is fine if that was the case– but the authors can probably just say this - it seems to be the predominant message but could be said more simply and directly.

3. The authors’ objective of a 'best balance' is the most difficult concept to explain to the reader as it is very context-specific - ie the filter that suits the needs of the database producers. If the authors are able to express the usefulness of the filter/ or describe a wider audience who might find this very specific filter useful, more succinctly, it will help searchers to understand whether this filter is the one for their needs as well as the authors'. In what circumstances would I want to use this filter if I am not preparing a major database resource?

4. Table 3 – Montori has a precision of 0.0 - perhaps need to explain this?

5. Discussion: "Fortunately, research into search filters has also found that more terms are not necessarily better [46] and fewer terms have been shown to perform at least as well as more lengthy searches [44]." - the authors should be careful to contextualise these two references.

6. Conclusions: "Methodological search filters reduce the number of articles needed to be screened and read while maintaining a high level of sensitivity for finding relevant articles" - this should be qualified with 'may' or 'might'

There are some typos and some sentences which will, inevitably, need revision once all the track changes have been accepted.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.