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: 21 February 2012

Reviewer: Jennifer Tieman

Reviewer's report:

Please number your comments and divide them into

- Major Compulsory Revisions
  Not applicable

- Minor Essential Revisions
  This paper highlights how useful it can be to test search strategies for their effectiveness in meeting their intended purpose. The revisions have clarified that the intent was to focus on the retrievals of the systematic reviews rather than systematic reviews of public health interventions.

  P1: It would be clearer if the authors retitled the paper “An optimal search filter for retrieving systematic reviews and meta-analyses for use in health-evidence.ca”

  The proposed evidence.ca SR filter does not by itself identify only public health systematic reviews. This, presumably, is accomplished by screening for relevance or by combining with topic searches.

  P14, para 3, pt 1 The two subsets of the gold standard used were selected as they were the ones used originally in developing and validating the evidence.ca SR. A comment as to why a third independent set was not used may be useful.

  P27, para 2, line 3 ...distinguishes the best filter. Please add to this sentence for our purposes.

  P12 para 2, line 5 CINAHL not CIHAHL

- Discretionary Revisions
  Not applicable.

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'