Reviewer's report

Title: Including mixed method research in systematic reviews: examples from qualitative syntheses in TB and malaria control

Version: 2 Date: 12 December 2011

Reviewer: Mary Dixon-Woods

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Major compulsory revisions

The authors could set out their approach a little more clearly. What they are really doing is using two previous reviews to generate a sample of qualitative studies and mixed method studies in order to make an assessment of how the quality of qualitative-only studies compares with that of mixed-methods studies. At the moment their explanation of this seems a little complicated.

The description of the methods used to conduct the syntheses in the original review is not necessary, and is potentially distracting. I would suggest leaving it out.

It is not correct to say that the first textbook on mixed methods was published in 2003. The authors need to justify their choice of date for dividing studies into “older” and “newer” in some other way.

The Interpretation section of the paper seems much too long and not always fully coherent. The authors should shorten in and make a brief set of focused points that are directly relevant to the findings of the paper.

In the Interpretation section, the authors seem to conflate making recommendations for future research with making findings relevant to decision-makers. I personally do not consider it a flaw if less than half of the articles reviewed did not recommend future research, and if the authors think it a flaw they need to justify their position much more thoroughly.

Minor essential revisions

There are still a lot of errors of expression, grammar and punctuation. The authors need to do some careful proof-reading. In addition, following sentences are confusing and need to be rephrased:

Though these studies include only a small proportion of available articles focusing on the larger topics of malaria prevention and experiences of TB treatment, the sample of 78 articles, 38 of which were mixed methods and 40 articles using qualitative methods is sufficient to begin exploration of study quality and rigour.
Academics of different backgrounds could have contributed to the articles included in this assessment, as they might adhere to particular research paradigms and this could affect the way the research is conducted and ultimately the credibility of the findings.

Unfortunately, examining author credentials was not possible due to the lack of reflexivity and lack of detail on author qualifications in the papers.

While we attempted to determine the number of times that an article contributes to a review, this was not possible based on the number of times an article was cited in the paper.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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