Reviewer’s report

Title: The reliability of a quality appraisal tool for studies of diagnostic reliability (QAREL)

Version: 1 Date: 16 April 2013

Reviewer: Penny Whiting

Reviewer’s report:

This was a clearly reported study. I think the main limitation may be the relatively small number of studies assessed for reliability. My comments are generally minor and I think all fall under the category of discretionary revisions:

Background
You state the QAREL assesses quality and applicability. I'd suggest that applicability is part of quality. How would you define quality if you do not include applicability as part of quality?

A very minor comment - you state that in this "chapter", do you mean "paper"?

I think the background could be improved by making it more concise.

Methods
You mention that the reviewers were quality health professionals. Could you also include some details on their reviewing experience and whether they had any previous experience of using QAREL and also whether they were involved in the development of QAREL?

Results
I think the results section could be improved by some restructuring and moving some of the information from the text in to tables, either by including additional columns in Table 1 or by the addition of a further table. For example, inclusion of information on the number of studies rates as "yes", "no", or "unclear" by each reviewer might be helpful in a Table rather than discussed in the text.

Discussion
I'm not sure that this is quite detailed enough. In particular the third point you make about the unequal distribution of responses and how this affects kappa values is not adequately explained. Could you also perhaps consider how your results are related to other similar studies? The relatively small number of studies and reviewers involved in the reliability exercise is not discussed.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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