Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 26 April 2013

Reviewer: Ana Marusic

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory revisions:
The question is well defined and the topic is important for improving the quality of appraisal of diagnostic tools.
The search strategy was not clearly presented – how many articles were retrieved from different databases? Did the search strategy (which looks rather broad) retrieve only 29 articles? It would be good to include these articles in the list of references, so that readers can judge the findings of raters for individual appraisal items.
The data are sound, but I am not sure if the paper is up-to date – the study used publications from 2007. The argument may be that the quality and standards of reporting improved over time (5 years!) so that raters would be more consistent in their evaluation.
As the raters discussed discrepancies and problems they had during rating, presenting these qualitative data in a more structured way could improve the paper. This is particularly important for those appraisal items that received lower kappa index.
Search strategy would need to be included in the Abstract too.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.