Reviewer's report

Title: Recommendations for a Uniform Assessment of Publication Bias Related to Funding Source

Version: 2 Date: 31 July 2013

Reviewer: Joel Lexchin

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

This manuscript attempts to establish a uniform method of classifying trial outcomes and sponsorship and offers up a series of recommendations. The authors state that they tested the reliability and usability of their recommendations by looking at the 472 manuscripts on RCTs. In the world of clinical practice guidelines this would be considered a derivation study. The next step before recommendations are accepted into practice is a validation study done by a group of different researchers on a different sample. Whether or not the authors are looking at their recommendations as clinical practice guidelines they need to show that they will prove to be acceptable to researchers in general. At this point even though on the surface the recommendations appear reasonable, they are still only the recommendations from a group of 3 investigators. Therefore, the authors need to indicate what further steps should be taken to establish at least face validity for their recommendations, e.g., using a Delphi technique with a larger group of researchers. Furthermore, even if the recommendations have face validity they are only useful if they change practice and therefore, the authors should also be recommending that future research see if the recommendations are being adopted in practice when people are looking at trial outcomes and sponsorship. Finally,

Minor essential revisions:

Page 3, third paragraph:

The authors should explain why non-inferiority and equivalence studies are especially problematic.

Page 6, Inadequate reporting of sponsorship:

Even if the authors do adhere to guidelines journal editors may not require the material to be reported.

Page 10, last paragraph:

A form for disclosure of sponsorship and support has been developed. See: Rochon et al. Open Medicine 2010;4(1):e69.

Discretionary revisions:
Page 3, third paragraph:

The phrase “reported scarcely” is awkward and should be reworded.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.