Reviewer's report

Title: No role for quality scores in systematic reviews of diagnostic accuracy studies

Version: 1 Date: 7 March 2005

Reviewer: Ann Van den Bruel

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper addresses a relevant problem in diagnostic reviews, being the quality assessment of individual studies. The QUADAS instrument provides a very reliable and valid tool for this quality assessment; an overall quality score could be very useful in practice as it could facilitate subsequent decisions in the review.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

In the methods section, the authors describe a subjective scoring system in scheme 5. From table 1, it can be seen that some items were given very large weight, in comparison to the other scoring systems where the maximum score was 3. It would be helpful if this subjective scoring was more explained, and why such high scores were used in contrast to the other scoring schemes.

In the results section, it would have been interesting to have some information on the contribution of individual items. Can differences in outcome of the various schemes be attributed to certain items?

In the discussion section, I find the conclusions too firm. The results apply only on a limited dataset of 1 diagnostic problem and using 1 quality assessment tool. The results could be different on another dataset, especially as differences were noted between the standard ultrasound and the contrast enhanced ultrasound. In general, it would have been interesting to recommend one scoring scheme as the most ideal, instead of looking at differences between scoring schemes. I have the feeling that it is more than natural that differences between the scoring schemes would be found, considering the fairly large range of possible scores. This does not necessarily mean that neither scoring scheme should be used or could be valid.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

In the methods section, some more details on the methods of the original review would be helpful, as there seems a difference between the two datasets that were used. Also, the authors mention that the quality assessment has been double-checked: do they mean that two independent researchers assessed quality, or have different methods been used?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.