Reviewer’s report

Title: Methodological quality of systematic reviews of animal studies: a survey of reviews of basic research.

Version: 1 Date: 26 October 2005

Reviewer: peter sandercock

Reviewer’s report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
   Yes, it is.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
   Yes.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
   Yes.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes, as far as I can tell.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Yes, though the English is not very clear. The wording needs to make it clear that attempted systematic reviews of bench studies had the highest proportion of methodological weaknesses, and the systematic reviews of whole animal studies were better, though apparently - not as good as systematic reviews of human trials (though such reviews of human methodology may not have applied exactly comparable standards).

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes.

7. Is the writing acceptable?
   Could be clearer as stated above.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Clarify the english around the main conclusions! At present it's confusing. The table and figures make it plain what the results are, but the wording of abstract, results and discussion is less clear. For example, the final conclusion in the abstract needs to make it clear that there is a gradient of frequency methodological weaknesses: human studies have the fewest, reviews of animal studies appear to have more, and reviews of bench studies the worst.

2. The figure needs a more detailed legend to explain what the column of p values is (I presume it's a test for the difference between animal and bench),
but it should say so, and say how it was calculated.

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper? Yes...in a way!

I am involved in systematic reviews of animal experiments