Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 11 December 2005

Reviewer: Colin West

Reviewer's report:

General

1. The authors have nicely addressed the majority of all reviewers' comments. My suggestions below are generally minor, and are largely aimed at improving readability of the manuscript.

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

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

2. Introduction: change "became" to "become" in "... it has become clear ..."

3. Methods: change "tables" to "table" in "... used a random number table ..."

4. Discussion: I agree with another reviewer that providing the statistical test comparing results with those of the Cochrane review paper (citation 14) is methodologically questionable. It would be better to report the raw numbers here, and remove the statistical test results. A statistical test across study results taken from very different methodologies is problematic. The raw numbers make your point clearly enough as it is.

5. Discussion: "The validity of our findings is inherent in the quality of our study." I am not sure what you are staying to say here, but the English isn't correct as it stands.

6. Discussion: "a priori" is two words.

7. Discussion: Write "... may have failed to capture ..."

8. Discussion: "etc." is an abbreviation and needs a period.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

9. In the introduction, you may wish to add a sentence after the nimodipine example to clarify why this is important. For example, if the following sentence is true, it may clarify your arguments. "... nimodipine in humans.[10] Because the initial animal studies were not evaluated systematically, human trials of nimodipine proceeded at significant cost and potential human risk despite a lack of clear scientific rationale."
10. In Methods, a comma may make the following sentence easier to read: "...latest publication for results, supplementing information ..."

11. In Methods, correct term is "... at a minimum ...

12. In Methods, you may wish to add a comma to make the following sentence easier to read: "... reviews of bench studies, defined as research ...

13. In Methods, the word "individually" does not seem necessary.

14. In Methods, the final sentence on power is not needed. I recognize this was added in response to another reviewer’s comments, but it is obvious why your effect size was chosen, and unnecessary to further explain this. I would delete the sentence, "This estimation ... power of our study."

15. In Methods, write "divided into three domains".

16. In Methods, write "These items assessed ...

17. In Methods, write "... level of significance was set at a=0.05 ..." (insert alpha symbol for a).

18. In Methods, write "Odds ratios and their ...", deleting "The".

19. In Results, write "... range of topics included ..." to match tense with previous sentence. Also add comma after "immunology".

20. In Discussion, write "... poor in their reporting ...

21. In Discussion, make "Validity or quality ...

22. In Discussion, write "...basic research since these results ... clinical studies are undertaken."

23. In Discussion, write "...prerequisite before results are further tested in human clinical trials."

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

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