Reviewer's report

Title: Optimizing Search Strategies to Identify Randomized Controlled Trials in Medline

Version: 4 Date: 9 February 2006

Reviewer: K Robinson

Reviewer's report:

General

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

1. In looking only at the abstract, it appears as though the same problems persist:

a) The second sentence notes that "some studies suggest that the precision of the third phase is too low to warrant its inclusion." I see no references to support this in the text. I believe that they may still be incorrectly making this statement based on the UKCC Pilot Study.

b) The third sentence notes that the Lefebvre and Clarke chapter suggest four revisions to the HSSS. In the same chapter, page 80, they also suggest that reviewers consider another term. It has never been clear why the authors picked these four terms.

c) I strongly believe that research should be set within the context of existing research. This includes setting up a rationale for a study at the beginning that considers all previous work. It also includes interpreting and integrating the results of that study with the existing research. I remain concerned about the lack of context provided in this manuscript.

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: No