Reviewer's report

Title: Worked examples of alternative methods for the synthesis of qualitative and quantitative research in systematic reviews

Version: 2 Date: 23 November 2006

Reviewer: Ann Mckibbon

Reviewer's report:

General
Lucas PJ, Arai L, Barid J, Law C, Roberts HM. Worked examples of alternate methods of qualitative and quantitative research in systematic reviews.

Review by Ann McKibbon

This article demonstrates two different approaches to qualitatively synthesize data from original studies and reports into a systematic review: textual narrative and thematic synthesis.

I suggest that this article be published. My comments are minor and I trust the authors to address the issues.

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

Nothing here although the first point in the section below needs to be addressed.

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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)

First I would like to see a discussion of the order of the two analyses. Were they done sequentially or in tandem? If sequentially, which one was done first? I would like to see this explained in the methods section and also in the discussion section. Is the fact that the reviewers were the same for both analyses a benefit or an impediment?

Second, please be careful with abbreviations. Do you really need to abbreviate SRs? I would suggest not as space is not an issue—your paper is short and is going to be published electronically. In addition, what is EPP? Do you need to abbreviate CRD? Please also indicate that the NHS is the UK NHS. I know that most people know but any organization that is “national” should have it’s country noted the first time it is mentioned. Similarly, what Department of Health funded the project? Thousands of departments of health exist and I would like to know which one funded the project.

Third, the references could do with a bit of a clean up. Please add URLs whenever possible. As this is an electronic document live links are wonderful. For example the first two references should have a URL as well as some of the other non-journal items if at all possible. The BMC article could have a URL also.

Please give full citation for Barid 2005b.

Some journal issues (i.e., number) are missing.

Fisher needs a volume and page number if possible.

Hall, Hewat and several others have a non consistent format for volume and issue.

Please remove the number of references (e.g., May and Rejan).

What are pages “US” for Rand and Reifsnider?
Other than that I suggest publication.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

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

Ann McKibbon