Reviewer's report

Title: Parenthood, information and support on the internet. A literature review of research on parents and professionals online

Version: 2 Date: 11 February 2009

Reviewer: Gauthier Bouche

Reviewer's report:

The changes made by the authors are adequate and their explanations for not answering to my comments are useful to understand their point of view. I have read with a great interest some articles about “scoping studies” and this gave me more elements to explain my former comments.

The first remark in my former letter was about the structure of the article. I know that a literature review can be systematic or narrative. What I meant was that, even if this is not a systematic review, you need to be rigorous in the process of the review and in the interpretation of the articles you selected. BMC Family Practice does not generally consider narrative review articles and that is why I asked the author to be more organized in the methods section. I am aware that a systematic review is not appropriate on such a topic. I made myself a literature review on a topic close to this one (not published) for a research and I am grateful for your extensive work.

Therefore, I would not come back on this point. Anyway, I have re-read your work with attention and I have other comments (see below) that could improve your work.

Major compulsory revisions

Page 13:
Please check your references following this sentence “The demographic profile of the average internet-using parent is that of a young, white, middle class woman, who mostly use the internet to search for health information and to visit parental web sites [34; 26; 25]”. If Cotten and Gupta have identified characteristics of online health information seekers, they did not mention any characteristics of parents going online.

Page 15:
The readability of the information you can find on the internet is another important hypothesis to explain differences according to socio-economic position in using the internet to seek health information. This should appear in this section. See for example:


Page 18:
The majority of the studies about the quality of the information assess the quality from a medical point of view. But as Delamothe said: “No omniscient detached observer exists who can simultaneously view an article through the eyes of a specialist researcher, doctor, patient, and member of the public, let alone take into account the different perspectives of orthodox and complementary medicine”. [Delamothe T. Quality of websites: kitemarking the west wind. BMJ. 2000 ;321(7265):843-4.]

Maybe you can balance the problem of the quality of websites with this kind of comment or reference.

Page 19:
“Typically they begin to try to deduce the underlying motive of the web site...”. I agree that this is a fact mentioned by Bernardt and Felter but I think this is often wrong and probably due to social desirability bias.

To support this point, I would site Eysenbach and Kohler [Eysenbach G, Köhler C. How do consumers search for and appraise health information on the world wide web? Qualitative study using focus groups, usability tests, and in-depth interviews. BMJ. 2002;324(7337):573-7]: “Contrary to the statements made in the focus groups, in practice we observed that none of the participants actively searched for information on who stood behind the sites or how the information had been compiled; often they did not even visit the home page”. I think this is important in your literature review to say that the only observational study available (to my knowledge) has shown that internet users do not generally check the motives and the “about us” section of the web sites they consult.

Page 22:
“Referring to the previous discussion on the digital divide, one of the primary problems can be that many parents simply do not have access to internet connected computers [35]. As a result, parents from more socioeconomically disadvantaged groups are at risk to be excluded from internet-based information and support.”

Again, I think that the main problem (or main problem-to-be) is now about the readability of the information, since access to the internet is more and more available, even in low-income families (As you said, 84% of Swedish citizens have access to the internet in 2007).

Minor essential revisions
Page 2: Abstract
The “results” section in the abstract is not really informative about your findings. Maybe results of the search strategy are too developed resulting in less space for results of the review.

Page 5 (last paragraph):
I propose that you mention that terms used for the search strategy are available in your first article on this topic (you could indicate it with “[3]”).

Page 7 (paragraph beginning with “However, despite this systematic…”)
This paragraph is more a discussion of your search strategy. I think it should be in the discussion section rather than in the methods section. Again, it could be simplified or removed since it has well been described in your previous article.

Page 12:
Is it possible to update the numbers of members of Netmum and FöräldraNätet? Since your paper is probably going to be published during Spring 2009, the numbers you give will seem obsolete at that time.

Page 19 (5 lines before the end):
Cotten and Gupta and not Cotton and Gupta

Conclusion (page 26 to 29)
I think that your conclusion is too long. I don’t mean it is not interesting but as a reader, I would think this is not really a conclusion.

Presentation of references
There are problems in the presentations of your references. See for example page 12, references are presented as [8; 29; 30; 1; 31] but should be [1, 8, 29-31].

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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