Reviewer's report

Title: Subcutaneous dextrose for rehydration of elderly patients - an evidence-based review.

Version: 1 Date: 12 January 2004

Reviewer: Brent Hodgkinson

Reviewer's report:

General
1. Overall a useful review that will be informative to readers and other reviewers if a number of essential changes are made.
2. The discussion of study limitations is good.
3. I would be happy to review the manuscript again once the changes have been made. I would like to see this review published but the changes are essential in order for the review to be clinically useful.
4. At present, due to the lack of presentation of data expert statistical review is not required.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. Is it essential to include paragraph 2 in the Background?
2. Why did you not check Embase? It includes some journals that Medline?pubmed does not. Also can have non-English articles of some importance.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Change Box 2 to read Table 3.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. I would think that it is important that the statements made in the Background section be cited. For example "However after reports of severe adverse reactions in the 1950s..."
2. It would be important to include a statement identifying why the clinician was only interested in articles over the last 10 years.
3. I think that the review would be easier to read if the results of each study followed the discussion of design and validity of each and if the study with the highest quality reported first.
4. The authors should have performed a comprehensive review of the literature before 1997 as by their own admission the systematic review has among other things, a limited search strategy.
5. The discussion of the results I feel is lacking in detail to help readers form their own conclusions about the data. It is essential in my view to include one or more tables that provides outcome data such as means and SD of laboratory measurements, Relative Risks (with 95% confidence intervals) for categorical data etc. For example, in the study by Slesak, volumes infused should be compared to the two ground (giving the mean volumes and SD) and then weighted mean differences provided. If the data was not readily provided then say so as this is a limitation of the study. P values are often misleading and not as informative as providing point estimate data such as relative risks.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None