Reviewer's report

Title: Reporting and Methodologic Quality of Cochrane Neonatal Review Group Systematic Reviews

Version: 3 Date: 22 December 2008

Reviewer: David Moher

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Minor Essential Revisions

I have several minor suggestions for the authors to consider for improving this draft. Two more pressing issues need resolution prior to any acceptance of the article, in my opinion.

There is a problem with table 1 and table 4. Table 1 indicates that there were 61 reports included in the study. In the text (of the results – page 7) the authors indicate that 70% of the reports were in the post QUOROM period. I don’t know where these numbers come from. Adding 1997, 98, and 99 results in 17 reports (17/61 = 28% in this time period and 82% for the post QUOROM time period. The text of the results indicates 70%. This discrepancy needs resolution. Assuming the 17/44 split in the QUOROM time periods, table 4 indicates 17/43 for this – again resolution is required.


I encourage the authors to consider using the results presented in Moher and colleagues as it is the most recent and comprehensive comparison of reporting Cochrane and non-Cochrane reviews (Moher D, Tetzlaff J, Tricco A, Sampson M, Altman DG. Epidemiology and reporting characteristics of systematic reviews. PLoS Med 2007; 4(3):e78).

On page 2 the authors indicate “For this reason, systematic reviews and meta-analyses have been introduced ...”. Perhaps it is more accurate to indicate “this is one of the many reasons for the introduction....”. It is far from the only reason for the use of such reviews.

On page 4 the authors need to reference the OQAO.

In the data extraction section (page 5) the authors need to indicate whether these assessments were completed ‘open’ or ‘blind’. In the same section the authors need to explain what “epidemiologic affiliation” refers to. In the same section the authors report that they “entertained” stratification based on the QUOROM
publication date. It looks to me that they actually did some analyses based on this – page table 4. Clarification is required (one of the other peer reviewers make a similar request).

On page 6 (pilot testing) the authors need to indicate whether any training was undertaken prior to pilot testing. Also on page 6, do the authors mean “normally” distributed rather than “centrally” distributed?

On page 7 the authors use the term “scores” when describing the results of the QUOROM assessments. This is inappropriate as QUOROM was not developed as a scale that produces scores. I think a term like “endorsing” or “reported” would be better. So the authors would be assessing the frequency with which a specific item is endorsed or reported in a systematic review.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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.