Reviewer’s report

Title: Psychological adjustment and quality of life in children and adolescents following open-heart surgery for congenital heart disease: a systematic review

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Reviewer: Marijke Miatton

Reviewer’s report:

This article reports on the psychological outcome and quality of life in children with congenital heart disease (CHD). It systematically reviews the literature over the last 17 years. The authors showed great effort to select only those studies with high methodological quality. The method is thus appropriate and well described. They appropriately explain the difficulties with this kind of research and give valuable suggestions for future research. This review and the suggestions will be helpful for all researchers in this field.

The manuscript can be accepted in its current form. However, some minor essential revisions:

1) Abstract:
   In the results section: (c) “the studies on QOL suggest no impairments”. Since further on in the article the authors mention that QOL can be rated by both the patients and a proxy, they should mention in the abstract whether the results are on self- or proxy reports.

2) Results:
   - p 6: proxy-reported psychological functioning: “seven studies observed significantly lower parent-reported overall functioning”. This result is confusing. According to table 1 all the studies mentioned, used the CBCL. The word “lower” suggests fewer problems; however in the next sentence more internalizing symptoms are mentioned, which will lead to misinterpretation.

   - p 7: “In contrast, four studies did not detect…” Are the results in these studies also parent-reported?

3) Discussion:
   Can the authors elaborate a bit further on the reasons why, according to them, many results are contradictory, despite the good methodological quality of many studies? This holds for psychological functioning as well as for QOL and risk factors.

   The authors use the word “cyanotic defects” only in the conclusion of their manuscript. There are two options: mention the distinction (cyanotic- acyanotic) earlier in the study and describe the outcome for both groups separately or keep the conclusion more general.
4) Table 2a: adjustment is typed incorrectly.

**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.

Kind regards,

Marijke Miatton