Reviewer’s report

Title: Effectiveness of interventions to improve the health and housing status of homeless people: A rapid systematic review

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Reviewer: Cheryl Zlotnick

Reviewer’s report:

This study provided a well-written and straightforward systematic review of literature, and will contribute to the literature by giving a summation of effective interventions. Generally, the methods were appropriate and well-described (with some recommended additions). Tables were useful and well-conceived. Results were clear. Researchers will greatly appreciate the addition in the text of the website for the instrument and dictionary. The area most in need of revision is the discussion. It relies heavily on a past work rather than emphasizing the findings of the current study.

Major Compulsory Revisions
None.

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract
# Under background, the first sentence is extraneous and can be deleted.

Background
# The paper could begin with the second paragraph: “Research on interventions…”

Study Selection
# The section is confusing. I had to look at the Figure to understand the flow. From Figure 1, it’s clear that 1546 were obtained, 415 met some screening criteria with the title and abstract. The authors mention that certain characteristics on the titles and abstracts were used in a screening. Which criteria were those? Since the Kappa was quite high, this information may be useful for future studies that want to conduct systematic reviews. The authors need to add a sentence or two indicating what they mean by “potentially relevant.”

# The following sentence is awkward and inconsistent with the figure: “All articles that were identified as potentially relevant were included for full relevance testing and quality assessment.” The figure indicates that 415 obtained full text
screening but only 84 were “quality assessed.”

# A comment - Given the nature of grey or fugitive literature and that by its very nature, it has not undergone peer review, I wonder whether it made sense to try and include it.

Results

# I was surprised that a pilot study (n=14) with such a small sample size achieved a methodologically moderate rating. Does this sample size merit this rating?

# Under Interventions…Substance Abuse- First sentence may have a type (and extra “that”) or is missing words.

Discussion

# The discussion seems to be based on validating a past work than focusing on elucidating results of the current review. That information is good; however, the conclusions of this study should be more expansive. For example, with such a wide literature search (from Appendix A) that did not specify homeless adults, there were only a few articles on homeless youth, and virtually none on families and children? This information is quite interesting since youth and families are a rapidly growing population. Why not bring this up in the discussion.

# The statement that “A total of 1546 new and unique articles …were methodologically weak and as a result <1% met inclusion criteria…” is inconsistent with the study selection paragraph which indicates that part of the exclusion criteria had to do with population.

Other

# If allowed by publisher and authors, I would recommend inclusion of the Appendix A search strategy and Appendix C with the summaries of the interventions.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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