Reviewer's report

**Title:** Characteristics of attempted self-poisoning in Sri Lanka; a systematic review

**Version:** 4  **Date:** 8 January 2013

**Reviewer:** Keshia M. Pollack

**Reviewer's report:**

I reviewed this paper when it was initially submitted in 2011. Now that it is resubmitted as a new publication it is much stronger, although there are still some issues that need to be addressed. Please see my comments below.

**Discretionary Revisions**

1. Page 7: paragraph 2 under ‘Rates of self-poisoning and repetition’. Consider better integrating the 1st two sentences since you already have a similar sentence in the Methods that defines repetition. Consider something like: The WHO SUPRE-MISS study explored repetition, defined as... to...”

2. Discussion: regarding a policy implication, in the U.S. to address pharmaceutical overdose, Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs are appearing. Are there similar regularly bodies in Si Lanka? There may be implications for regulatory policy that you want to mention.

**Major Compulsory Review**

1. Methods: was the search only accomplished using keywords? Did you use any MeSH terms? Since most systematic reviews use MeSH terms, and you did not, if this is correct, a statement to this point is needed.

2. Methods: the search only focused on peer review papers and did not search the grey literature. I would add this to the text.

3. Analysis strategy: when all three authors reviewed the data extraction: say more here? Were they individually reviewed by each author and agreements/disagreements discussed? Did you assess inter-rater reliability?

4. Results: the 26 publications covered 23 studies: did you decide to keep the articles that reported data from the same study in multiple articles because the research questions were different in each of the papers? I suggest adding a sentence to address this point.

**Minor Essential Review**

1. Background: in the prior review of this article, I made a comment about the need for a definition of repetition rate. The response to the reviewers said that it was added to the Methods. Since repetition rate is used in the 2nd paragraph of the Background, add it here too. Suggest that you say something like: repetition rate (i.e., suicide reattempt rate).
2. Background, paragraph 2, line 11: Begin a new sentence at “For example.”

3. Page 4: 1st line: Change text to say: “The main aim of this systematic review is to examine…”

4. Same paragraph as above: Change ‘secondarily’. This is not grammatically correct. Consider changing to “A second aim of this study is to…."

5. Methods: 1st paragraph: change “Further to this” to “In addition”

6. Page 5: Line 10 under Inclusion Criteria: “Studies were not included”. Shouldn’t this be in the section on Exclusion Criteria?

7. Same paragraph as above, add a copy after ‘studies’ in the final sentence.

8. As pointed out in my prior review, add a comma whenever there is a “i.e.” or “e.g.”

9. Results: ingestion by pesticide seems to be an important issue. Can you say anything more about the mechanism here? Are these small children getting into products? There was some detail about medicinal overdoses, but I am specifically asking about pesticide ingestion. I saw mention of ingestion from home or gardens. The reason that I ask is that understanding who and how, might help guide prevention efforts.

10. Discussion: Page 12, 1st full paragraph: Change firstly to first (also in the Implications section on page 16; use first, second, and third for the paragraphs) Also, whenever there is a first there is usually a second. Add this here when make your second point.

11. Discussion: overall, it read like a repeat of the Results, with some studies showing the broader context. Is there any way to try to integrate the findings better?

12. Limitations: the first paragraph refers to publication bias. I consider that you include this phrase in describing this limitation based to the review including papers that have been published in peer review journals.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no conflicts to declare.