Reviewer's report

Title: Systematic quantitative overviews of the literature to determine the value of diagnostic tests for predicting acute appendicitis: study protocol

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Reviewer: Dr Stefan Sauerland

Level of interest: A paper of considerable general medical or scientific interest

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

In its revised version the manuscript "Systematic quantitative overviews of the literature to determine the value of diagnostic tests for predicting acute appendicitis: study protocol" has been clearly improved. Many of the critical aspects have been clarified and the appendices provide enough detail to understand the review methods.

Therefore, the manuscript now seems acceptable for publication. I will be delighted in a few years time to read about the results of this enormous project. In the following points, perhaps some last minor changes could be added:

1. I still think that the already published meta-analyses, which I cited in my first comments, deserve to be at least mentioned. If the authors think that these meta-analyses have important limitations, they can say so, but in my eyes, it is too harsh to state that there is "a dearth of focused, rigorous overviews".

2. My primary concern, that perhaps the authors of this manuscript were not familiar with the current knowledge in their field, was misunderstood. I did not mean their methodological, but their clinical background, because the existing meta-analyses weren't mentioned at all.

3. The meta-analysis on computed tomography which I mentioned is led by Prof. Christian Ohmann in Dusseldorf. Perhaps, it is useful to contact him (ohmannch@uni-duesseldorf.de) to avoid duplication of work.

4. When stating that it is problematic to combine a randomised and an observational study, I had the following scenario in mind: One (cohort) study describes sensitivity and specificity of a diagnostic test, and a second (randomised) study uses this diagnostic test only in half of patients. How can data from these two studies aggregated? As already suggested by the second reviewer, systematic reviewing may be the better alternative here instead of pooling.

Competing interests:

None declared.