Reviewer's report

Title: Sildenafil (Viagra): a meta-analysis of clinical trial reports

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Reviewer: Prof Irwin Nazareth

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

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

This is a clearly presented, well-written and interesting paper that I would strongly recommend for publication. I have a few suggestions for improvement.

My comments on each section are listed below: -

1. Abstract
The abstract is brief, to the point, and contains the main aspects of this review. It might be useful if some of the important results reported in the results section of the paper are also reported in the abstract (e.g. NNT of at least 60% of successful attempts at sexual intercourse, treatment related adverse effects, all causes of discontinuation of therapy etc).

2. Introduction
This section is well presented and highlights the need for systematic reviews and meta-analyses prior to the introduction of new technologies. I have no further comments to make here.

3. Method
Once again, this section is very clearly described but would benefit from the following:-

i) Reasons for excluding studies as listed in the first paragraph of the Methods Section

ii) Justification for the following exclusion factors:-
   a) studies that investigated rectal function in the clinical setting
   b) studies that used fixed daily dosing, rather than as required
   c) studies that were shorter than four weeks
   d) Similarly, justification for the inclusion criteria of four weeks.

i) There are a few typographical errors in this section. In the third paragraph, 6th line, after the word 0%, "intercourse" should read intercourse. Similarly, on the next page under efficacy, the first bullet point should read number of men in whom the proportion of successful attempts at sexual intercourse was more than 60%, rather than what is currently written.

ii) The authors must justify using a fixed effect model for their meta-analysis rather than a random effect
model. It would also be useful if the pros and cons of the two types of analysis. Suitable references for these statistical methods are required.

iii) It would be useful if the authors provided more detail of how the exact scoring based on three items (scores 1-5) was developed and applied to the studies in question.

3. Results: This section is well presented with clear descriptions of each of the outcomes of interest. I have no specific comments to add here.

4. Discussion
This section is well written and logically presented with recommendations made about future reports. It would be valuable if the authors, highlighted yet once more the need for doing a systematic review or a meta-analysis by the drug companies, prior to the marketing new drugs or new technology. This has been alluded to in the introduction but has not been revisited in this section.

Competing interests:
None declared.