Reviewer's report

Title: Factors influencing the effectiveness of multisource feedback in improving the professional practice of medical practitioners: A systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 28 January 2014

Reviewer: Petra Bywood

Reviewer's report:

Minor essential revisions

1. Give specific numbers: Throughout the manuscript, the authors use terms such as “a number”, “some”, “the majority” of studies etc. It would be more helpful to the reader to indicate just how many studies (of the 16 reviewed) reported a particular finding.

2. Results: Impact of MSF on medical professionals’ professional practice. The Brinkman et al. RCT reported here as showing significant improvements in various behaviours also reports very wide confidence intervals for each of these behaviours. Thus the precision is poor, the findings are uncertain and more data are needed to make more definite statements about measures.

3. Discussion. Strengths and limitations: “Applying Buckley et al’s quality criteria ensured that all included papers met a high standard”. This statement is somewhat misleading. It would be more accurate to say that Buckley’s quality criteria were used to eliminate the very poor quality studies. The next paragraph states that “most of the studies were conducted on small volunteer-based samples”, which is not really high standard of quality.

4. Source of the feedback (1st paragraph): “A large minority of raters in this study …” This statement doesn’t really make sense (oxymoron?). It would be more useful to state how many or what proportion of raters etc.

5. Strengths and limitations (2nd paragraph): The fact that 5/16 articles examined the same sample population needs to be emphasised as it contributes to strong publication bias in favour of the intervention. Thus the statement in the following paragraph – “In fact, in this review the strongest evidence for improved performance ….” is based on findings from the same group of studies.

6. Table 7. Key findings: “negative comments may stimulate behavioural change” – add “except where comments are inconsistent with physicians’ own perceptions”

Discretionary revisions

1. 1st paragraph in background: “A recent systematic review …”. Overeem et al. was published in 2007, which is not exactly ‘recent’.

2. Some elements of data are too general and vague. A little bit of description/explanation of the terms ‘communication’, ‘clinical competence’ and collaboration’ would be useful. These are such broad terms and have multiple
meanings depending on context and purpose.

**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