Reviewer's report

Title: e-MIR2: a public online inventory of medical informatics resources

Version: 1 Date: 22 March 2012

Reviewer: Catherine Smith

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I am flagging these as “compulsory” simply because I think they are necessary to address to make this potentially important resource easier for readers to understand – particularly because readers are all potential users!

2. The definition of just what constitutes an “informatics resource” needs to be very clear at the beginning of the manuscript; I have searched the database being described in this ms. and remain a bit confused, although I see that it means “databases and tools” and thus constitutes a constantly moving target. I’m not sure if this is an intraprofessional jargon thing, or an international jargon thing, or what.

3. p. 5: “top-ranked MI journals by a panel of experts”: Who are the experts? It would be nice to know a little bit about their professional background, given the diverse range of possibilities in medical informatics. See also comment 6.

4. p. 5: “A panel of experts manually reviewed..” Was this the same panel of experts that did the manual selection of articles about informatics resources? Whether it was the same panel or a different panel, I’d like to know something about them, too. Mostly, for comments 3 and 4, I would like to know if the experts are the authors.

5. On p. 7 the authors state “origin source – e.g. PubMed or Google Scholar”. Since the journals being abstracted for this database are all indexed in PubMed, and Google Scholar has been scraping PubMed (although with Google one never knows, since they haven’t released their content partners’ identities for years and this may change at any time) … I’m not sure why Google Scholar is mentioned here, unless the point is that there are citations within Google Scholar which are themselves tracked by e-MIR?? If that is the reason for mentioning GS, it would be helpful to clarify that point.

6. p. 8: “To populate the e-MIR database, we selected eight top-ranked journals in the MI field”: No quarrel at all with the list of journals, but “top-ranked” is a bit subjective unless you say what the ranking was based on. ISI impact factor? Popularity? Publisher-reported downloads? I would like to know this since the assumption that these are “top” journals has a great deal to do with your conclusions about the field of medical informatics – see my comment below re p. 13. The inclusion of the IEEE journal in particular raises several of my eyebrows – not because it isn’t top, but because that one has a different kind of audience than all the others.
7. p. 9: “Both duplicates and non-classified resources” – I’m assuming “duplicate” means a resource that was mentioned in more than one article from these 8 journals? (Visible Human, UMLS Metathesaurus, etc.) Can you clarify?

8. p. 13: The issue that raises the biggest concern for me is the statement in the discussion: “This measure suggests that MI journals traditionally do not publish many papers dealing with informatics resources.” That’s one interpretation from the data, but there are a bunch of other possible interpretations— for example, the 8 journals being sampled are the wrong journals (Methods of Information in Medicine can’t be expected to focus on resources as much); the 8 journals being sampled have particular characteristics that are not typical of the rest of the journals in the field; 8 is too few journals to base a conclusion on; the method by which “informatics resources” are automatically identified is not adequate; etc. So my reaction to this statement was that it was not quite guarded enough.

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.