Reviewer's report

Title: Utilization of the PICO framework to improve searching PubMed for clinical questions

Version: 1 Date: 7 March 2007

Reviewer: Pamela Royle

Reviewer's report:

General.

This is a nice pilot study, with clearly defined aims, sound methods and answering a useful and practical question for those in the area. The authors also clearly state the limitations of their study.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The numbering of the references is incorrect after reference 5 (reference 6 is actually part of ref. 6)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

It is usual convention to express precision as percentages and with confidence intervals.

Would be nice to have a little more discussion about the 3 questions and which study designs are required eg. Q1 is a prognosis questions and Q2 and Q3 are therapy questions.

Maybe some discussion around the fact that PICO format is designed for therapy questions (especially PICO A) and would expect it to perform best in Q2 and Q3 - but it actually PICO Q and B perform best on Q1?

Not sure about if the word ‘facile’ is grammatically correct (in para 4 in Discussion) here. Suggest use something like 'skilled' or 'accomplished' or 'adept'.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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'