Reviewer's report

Title: Organising health care services for people with an acquired brain injury: An overview of systematic reviews and randomised controlled trials

Version: 2  
Date: 9 May 2014

Reviewer: Robbert Huijsman

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Your objective of the study is to identify the most up-to-date, high quality sources of evidence to answer specific questions (RH underlining) of interest regarding organising health services for people with an acquired injury, inclusive of stroke. In de section Methods (box 1) we learn more about those specifics questions, but without any explaining text. Why did you work this way, in stead of the more traditional open review approach to find any significant evidence on any subject? Why these seven questions and no others? Why pre-specify for instance ‘integrated care pathway’, as there are many other substitute terms for this. Why question 7? Please elaborate on this. Your Results only cover 4 questions, why not skip of the three other questions? They deliver no results either, it feel it will make your article more concise. The discussion on these essentials is also rather poor.

2. Be more precise on your inclusion criteria and the controls/checks you have used to be sure that there are now falsely in- or excluded articles. Although you included your MEDLINE search strategy, the text is now too broad to fully understand who complete and appropriate the material is. Besides reviews, you also included individual articles. It is a bit unclear when and how you desided to do so, and what the results and impacts are of this two-step approach. Perhaps you could to a check on a paper of my own group (BMC uses open peer review, so you know my name). Not to get citated (ethics!), but to test whether it is correctly excluded by you. Reference: Exel, N.J.A. van, M.A. Koopmanschap, L.W. Niessen, R. Huijsman, Cost effectiveness of integrated stroke services: a prospective, non-randomised controlled trial in 411 Dutch patients Q J Med, 98: 415-425.

3. The Results section is structured by your seven questions, within each of these paragraphs you follow the same structure of description/quality /effects (and within that patients and secondary outcomes). This structure is already complex, but get even more complex when you build in another level, i.e. subjects within question 4 (case management, early supported discharge, short term programs). You lose me as your reader even more, because these topics are slightly different than worded in the question (‘organised follow-up’).

4. The discussion might be structured slightly better, by including headings and more compact writing. So issues you only touch upon, without much elaboration
(ABIEBR, pre-selection of organisational interventions, future research).

Minor Essential Revisions

5. In the paragraph Data collection and analysis be more precise on which author performed which task, adding initials wherever possible (you only did this once, on page 9, second line). Also in the Discussion on page 25 below.

6. Editorial check is necessary, for typing errors (example: last sentence on page 4: ‘lead’ in stead of ‘leads’; full stop after [16] on page 11 and in the line directly below this reference include ‘the’ in ‘…. in each of [the] study arms…’ ) and for consistent use of space before a reference number

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.