Reviewer's report

Title: Reporting of measures of accuracy in systematic reviews of diagnostic literature

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Reviewer: Dr Lucas M. Bachmann

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

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

Comment on the Submission by Honest et al.
Reporting of measure of accuracy in systematic reviews of diagnostic literature

General:
The authors provide a description of measures of accuracy in systematic reviews of DARE. The central issue of the paper is on generalizability of the reported findings. The reader may be unclear, whether this paper provides results from particularistic occurrence research (describes a phenomenon, e.g. accuracy measures found in DARE) or if the aim of the study was to provide scientific results (description of an abstract relation in general).
The following suggestions may help to clarify the issue:

According to the actual content of the paper the title might be changed into "Reported measures of accuracy in systematic reviews of diagnostic literature (in DARE)"

The paper should provide a comprehensive description of the selection process that leads to the inclusion of a systematic review into DARE

Scientific results should provide the magnitude of uncertainty (confidence intervals)

Other points:
Abstract:
Previous research findings (Walter and Jadad) should be stated and additional value of the current study should be clearly described.

Introduction
Page 3 (first paragraph) Citation 1 provides information about biased conclusions drawn by authors "because of lack of use of appropriate accuracy measures". It is unclear what is meant by appropriateness of accuracy measures. There is increasing evidence, that clinicians misinterpret all kinds of accuracy measures (for example: Eddy DM. Probabilistic reasoning in clinical medicine: Problems and opportunities. In Kahnemann D, Slovic P, Tversky A, eds. Judgement under Uncertainty: Heuristics and biases., pp 249-67. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, Hoffrage U, Lindsey

Methods
Page 3 The Search strategy should be referenced.
Description of the selection process that leads to inclusion of a review into DARE should be added

Page 4 Time trend analysis: the authors should explain why they used two groups and what were the criteria to choose the time intervals.
The method section should provide a section on statistical analysis.

Results
Page 4 Was there any disagreement between the hand search and the electronic searching of DARE? (See Methods Page 3)
Since the authors state a double-checking process (Methods page 4, second para) they might provide the measurement of agreement.
How many studies were on diagnostic effectiveness or cost?
Change of number of meta-analyses performed should be further (statistically) explored.

Page 5 Time trend analysis: Report of the (statistically not significant) results might be added.

Discussion
Page 5 The authors may discuss the lack of appropriate accuracy as a reason for biases in clinical judgment along with the available evidence on the topic. Since the paper is a description of test accuracy measures found in DARE they might also decide not to discuss the potential for biases at all.

References
Page 6 Typing error (reference 2)

Competing interests:
The Reviewer has an honorary appointment at the University of Birmingham (UK) and works together with the two authors on other projects.