Reviewer's report

Title: Converting systematic reviews to Cochrane format: a cross-sectional survey of Australian authors of systematic reviews

Authors:

Dr Janet H Piehl (jpiehl@bigpond.com)
Sally Green (sally.green@med.monash.edu.au)
Steve McDonald (steve.mcdonald@med.monash.edu.au)

Version: 5 Date: 19 Dec 2002

Reviewer: Dr Helen Handoll

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

The authors have addressed all of the important points and I think the manuscript is much improved and acceptable for publication. It is very readable and I think has a broader appeal than previously. I have two reservations that would amount to "discretionary" / optional revisions.

1. I think it would be better to indicate in 'Abstract: Results' that the percentages are based on completed responses to questions. Perhaps putting the following after "Cochrane Collaboration (21%)."

"(Percentages based on completed responses to individual questions.)"

2. I couldn't find the revision implied by the authors for Discretionary revision 4: "Language changed to reflect that this statement was made by a single respondent."

As I don't think that the Cochrane system always entails 3 peer review sessions (and indeed in my experience can take less time than some journal publication) I suggest that the following sentence:

"Time constraints affected three authors, with one expressing frustration that the Cochrane system entails peer review three times, adding tremendously to the time until publication."

is changed to:

"Time constraints affected three authors. One expressed frustration that the peer review entailed by the Cochrane system could add tremendously to the time until publication."

Competing interests:

Non-financial, but not competing, interests: I am a former Cochrane Review Group Co-ordinator and continue to be an active Cochrane reviewer. I do not gain