Reviewer's report

Title: Policymakers' and other stakeholders' perceptions of key considerations for health system decisions and the presentation of evidence to inform those considerations: an international survey

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Reviewer: Nils Stenström

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Review

Policymakers’ and other stakeholders’ perceptions of key considerations for health system decisions and the presentation of evidence to inform those considerations: an international survey

Review in accordance to Guidance for reviewers stated by Health Research Policy and Systems.

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

It is clearly stated that the aim of the study was to collect information regarding the experience and perceptions of participants with respect to the proposed [the ten DECIDE framework] criteria, assessments of the quality of evidence used to inform judgments about the effects of interventions, and summaries of research evidence of the effects of health system intervention.

The research question is interesting according to the increasing interest of evidence grading and recommendations. The objective of the study is relevant and warranted since the DECIDE framework is under development and should be evaluated before recommended and utilized in broader contexts.

Other examples of evidence-grading and recommendations system could be presented, or at least mentioned, in the background.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

The procedures are well described and the web-based survey is provided as an additional online file. However, the selection of participants is doubtful. The authors do not provide any information about the choice of the sampling frame. All countries invited to participate in the survey are working with DECIDE or SURE, and WHO is involved in the GRADE/DECIDE-system. Thus, a positive result could be expected.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

The response rate was 93% from the DECIDE partner countries. From WHO the response rate was 50% and from the SURE countries the response rate was
46%. Thus, the countries that are involved in the DECIDE-project are the ones that have given most responses in the survey, which gives an impression of bias. No differences in the responses from the different countries are described. The results in general are very positive. What would the result look like if the same questions had been asked to representatives from countries that are not familiar with evidence grading and recommendation systems? Were the two respondents that indicated that they disliked evidence grading systems from DECIDE countries?

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

The results shown in figure 1, 2 and 3 would be better presented in bar charts.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The positive results are not unexpected due to potential study bias and should be questioned and discussed more thoroughly by the authors.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Yes, but the aim of the study is not explicitly stated in the abstract.

7. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes, the paper is well written and clearly structured.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.