Reviewer's report

Title: Potential benefits of using a toolkit developed to aid in the adaptation of HTA reports: A case study considering positron emission tomography (PET) and Hodgkin's Disease

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Reviewer: Chris Hyde

Reviewer's report:

This a simple well written paper on a topic of interest. The question is well defined and the methods are clearly described. The data presented are adequately analysed. No standards of reporting are applicable to this type of study as far as I know.

My main concern is the extent to which the data provided support the conclusion proposed. The paper clearly demonstrates that there is duplication but the authors do not in my view fully explore the reasons why the duplication might have occurred and ruled out justifiable repetition. A simple example is that methods of analysing test accuracy data have developed enormously over the period in question. Using up-to-date analytical methods might alone justify apparent duplication.

More importantly I am unclear how the use of the tool-kit has been demonstrated to have the potential to reduce the observed duplication. There is insufficient detail on what the tool-kit is and whether it would work in the way claimed. Further given the description of this research as a case-study I was expecting some attempt to explore with the HTA report authors whether the checklist would actually have stopped them doing the new report, or allowed them to skip over aspects of the report which had already been covered in previous HTAs. Sometimes the groups have no choice in whether to proceed. For instance the NICE Public Health Guidance programme insists that past reviews cannot be used as the starting point for new research syntheses they commission. Clearly this topic would not be the subject of Public Health Guidance, but I do wonder whether there are analogous organisational imperatives and rules which preclude HTA teams from building on previous work in the way they might ideally wish.

The bottom-line is that I'm not sure that there is really enough content in this paper at present to justify publication, certainly with the conclusions as stated. I would however strongly encourage the research team to continue to pursue this line of enquiry.

Level of interest: Reject as not of sufficient priority to merit publishing in this journal

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I receive research funding from the organisation, NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC, for which the authors work.