Reviewer's report

Title: Do 'public health' parenting interventions work for children? A systematic review and meta-analysis of Triple P parenting programmes

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Reviewer: Jane Barlow

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting and worthwhile report, which I would very much like to see published. However, I feel that there are a number of major compulsory revisions required as follows:

1. The paper moves between the use of the term 'public health' in the title, and 'population-based' interventions in the main body of the paper, without distinguishing or defining either. My real concern about this, is that the review proceeds to include all evaluations of Triple P parenting programs, which I find strange because level 4 and 5 of the Triple P programme do not in my opinion constitute a population-based approach on their own. In the discussion, the authors then refer to 'whole population interventions' which again immediately moves to a discussion of the public health benefit of such programmes without definition. To my mind the three trials referred to in this section, are in fact the only true 'population-based' or for that matter 'public health' approaches to the implementation of this programme.

My point here is that this is a review of the effectiveness of the Triple P programme not a review of whole population parenting programmes because it only includes studies that have evaluated component parts of the Triple P public health programme.

2. The background section is very brief and on the whole a rather poor overview of the issue of population-based approaches or for that matter parenting programmes.

There have been at least 3 very good systematic reviews/meta-analyses of the Triple P parenting programme none of which are referenced here. I would also really like to know in what way the current review differs from the earlier ones. Why didn't the authors simply update one of the earlier reviews?

4. The eligibility inclusion are not to mind adequate. If the authors are interested in population-based approaches, where are the inclusion criteria that define what a population-based approach should include? The application of levels 4 or 5 of Triple P are not a population-based approach. Surely such an approach would involve the use of a population-level programme (e.g. Prinz study) or levels 4/5 of Triple P but with a population sample. Why are the authors only including Triple P?
5. Some of the referencing is rather bizarre. For example, in the discussion the Barlow review of parenting programmes for children under 2 is used as a reference to a sentence that reads ‘All the studies involved only children aged over two years’?

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.