Reviewer's report

Title: Dealing with Heterogeneity of Treatment Effects: Is the Literature Up to the Challenge? A Systematic Review

Version: 2 Date: 15 December 2008

Reviewer: David Moher

Reviewer's report:

1. “systematic review” should be removed from the title. Perhaps a something like “a literature sample” would be better.

2. I found the identification (page 8) of the trials cumbersome and would like to know why the authors did not use an RCT filter as part of the search strategy?

3. The authors may want to note that all journals except NEJM endorsed CONSORT in 1994. NEJM came on board in 2004 or 2005.

4. On page 15 (and figure 2) the authors propose some reporting guidance. How was this guidance developed – like the recent STROBE statement or something more informal? If the latter the authors might want to note this as a potential limitation of the guidance. Similarly, the authors might want to elaborate on how the proposed reporting guidance fits into the current CONSORT reporting guidance for randomized trials – particularly the CONSORT explanatory paper ().