Reviewer's report

Title: Evidence Summaries: The Evolution of a Rapid Review Approach

Version: 1 Date: 8 July 2011

Reviewer: Michael Wilson

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript presents an outline of the authors’ experience with producing evidence summaries (or ‘rapid reviews’) through their program of research. Rapid reviews are increasingly seen as an important tool for supporting the use of research evidence by those making decisions about and within health systems. By providing an overview of their approach, the authors provide a helpful methodological contribution that can inform others that offer similar services or are interested in developing a process for providing rapid reviews.

Major essential revisions
1. The manuscript could be strengthened by including a critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach for evidence summaries. For instance, the implications of having a set timeline for a rapid review on supporting the use of research evidence by decision-makers facing timelines shorter than 5 weeks could be explored. If a decision-maker needs evidence more urgently, is there a way to provide this type of support while still focusing on providing relevant and high-quality research evidence? Other services that provide rapid reviews have included a sliding scale of expectations of what can be provided given the length of time provided. Such a discussion could include what trade-offs would be faced if a review were to be produced in a shorter period of time (e.g., using only one reviewer to assess the search results, not conducting explicit assessments of quality or the level of evidence, conducting searches just for systematic reviews using existing databases of reviews or search hedges provided through PubMed/Medline, etc.).

Minor essential revisions
2. Line 112 (2nd paragraph on page 4): Reference #3 is repeated twice.
3. Line 183 (top of p. 7): Possible typo in the sentence before Box 3 – should be ‘accessed’

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:

One of the authors (Jeremy Grimshaw) was a member of my PhD committee and we continue to collaborate on several projects but I was not aware of or involved in any aspect of the project described.