Reviewer's report

Title: Influenza vaccines licensed in the United States in healthy children: A systematic review and network meta-analysis (Protocol)

Version: 1 Date: 25 October 2012

Reviewer: Chris Del Mar

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This is a protocol for an ‘overview’ or ‘umbrella’ review to inform the US health system about influenza vaccines (both live attenuated and inactive killed) licenced there. The methods appear to be properly designed, and will conform to PRISMA. The Authors will use DistillerSR to manage the extensive data, which should increase efficiency. The only surprises were:

1 In addition to finding the SRs of the area, the Authors plan to supplement any new RCTs that have been missed, by going to experts in the field.
   a. Firstly, why? Are the Authors not setting themselves up for a huge amount of extra work.
   b. Will this mean that any new RCTs will require the re-run of any meta-analyses already undertaken?
   c. Should they also go to manufacturers to try and obtain *unpublished* RCTs? Withheld data has become a concern in modern times.
2 the Peters method of publication bias methods – but there is good argument for using this.
3 The Authors quote Jefferson’s Cochrane review. After re-reading this, one wonders what this umbrella review will add that is not already addressed in this long and extensive review.
4 Is it too restrictive to have only vaccines registered in the US?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

Some of my work is for the Cochrane Collaboration, which might be thought of as a competitor for this kind of article.