Reviewer’s report

Title: Designing an optimum search strategy for a diagnostic test accuracy review of psychometric instruments: a comparison of three methods in postnatal depression

Version: 3 Date: 13 July 2011

Reviewer: Becky Skidmore

Reviewer’s report:

The paper has benefited from follow-up edits by the authors. Overall this is a valuable study and heralds the way for further studies in other mental health conditions using different databases where increased volume and more varied result sets would allow for broader conclusions.

Discretionary Revisions

I anticipate the paper will be further copy edited but some of the new content is still awkwardly worded and would benefit from shorter sentences with fewer clauses. I felt it necessary to re-read some sentences to fully understand them. Part of this is due to the use of semi-colons and the words “therefore” or “however”. The text would be more readable if it were broken into separate sentences.

E.g.

#1 The Cochrane DTA Handbook advises against adding a methodological filter therefore this method was the third search strategy tested using only components related to the target condition and index test, and is hereafter referred to as the ‘Cochrane search’ (Appendix 3).

THIS COULD BE BROKEN DOWN INTO MULTIPLE SENTENCES FOR CLARITY.

The Cochrane DTA Handbook advises against adding a methodological filter. It uses only two concepts--the target condition and index test. This was the third strategy tested (hereafter referred to as the “Cochrane search”).

#2

Whilst the Cochrane search and CRD filter search identified this study, the Vincent filter search failed to identify the DTA study of the questions with the gold standard comparator [20]; the most important and pertinent paper to the systematic review of DTA of this psychometric measure for postnatal depression.

THIS SENTENCE REPEATS MOST OF THE TEXT THAT IMMEDIATELY PREcedes IT – YOU COULD PROBABLY SIMPLY STATE:

Whilst the Cochrane search and CRD filter search identified this study [20], the Vincent filter search failed to do so.
The Vincent filter search included specific filter terms to identify DTA studies and the overall total number of studies retrieved was low so precision was slightly higher than the Cochrane search; however sensitivity was low and it failed to retrieve a DTA study which used a gold standard diagnostic criteria, the only study in the reference set to do so [20].

YOU COULD BREAK THIS INTO MULTIPLE SENTENCES.

The Vincent filter search included specific filter terms to identify DTA studies, so precision was slightly higher than that observed with the Cochrane search. At the same time, recall was lower in comparison with the Cochrane search. As such, the Vincent search failed to retrieve the most important study to the review, a DTA study which used gold standard diagnostic criteria [20].

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.