Reviewer’s report

Title: Are Systematic Reviews Up-to-date at the Time of Publication?

Version: 1 Date: 16 January 2013

Reviewer: Jessie McGowan

Reviewer’s report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. This is an important topic as it is important to know how up-to-date a SR is at the time of publication. How did you conduct the random sample to arrive at 300 SRs?

- Minor Essential Revisions

2. The citation for citation #9 does not seem complete. Please check the style guide.

3. In the background section, you state: “Many readers of systematic reviews scan the abstract in order to determine the relevance of the review to their needs.” Is there any evidence to suggest how reader determine relevancy – is it the abstract, or the title, or the keywords, the background, etc.?

4. In the conclusions you state: “To aid readers in rapidly determining the currency of a systematic review, we believe that the date of search should be present in its abstract. Improvements in the quality of abstracts of systematic reviews and ways to shorten the review and revision processes to make review publication more rapid are needed.” Can you provide suggestions on how you think this can happen?

- Discretionary Revisions

4. The finding of a 8.0 month publishing delay is interesting. From the 300 citations, did you do an analysis of where the SR were published, such as open access versus traditional journal publishing? How many of these were from The Cochrane Library? This may be interesting to understand publishing behavior in order to determine how and where better reporting can take place. You could make a note that this could be a topic for further research.

5. PRISMA is essential for reporting of SRs. In your background, item 8 is mentioned as the related item. There is also full reporting tool for the electronic search strategy called PRESS upon which this item is based on. It may be useful to also note PRESS. This is the result of the work that you noted in citation 11 (No consensus exists on search reporting methods for systematic reviews. J Clin Epidemiol 2008, 61:748-754.). However, the focus is on the running of the search and it does not include the DATE of the search, which is the point of this research but it is related information to the larger issue.


6. Below are some references you may want to review:

Updating Searches for Systematic Reviews. Sampson, MJ. http://cadair.aber.ac.uk/dspace/handle/2160/3760


**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:**

I declare that I have no competing interests