Reviewer's report

Title: Systematic review of the effectiveness of training programs in medical writing and publishing

Version: 1 Date: 18 April 2013

Reviewer: Kerry Dwan

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the study design appropriate?
Yes
2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing?
Yes but please see comments below
3. Is the planned statistical analysis appropriate?
Yes but please see comments below
4. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

Minor comments
1. Search methods - How will you identify administrators of training opportunities
2. Data extraction – what do you mean by 50% discrepancies?
3. Measures of effect – how do you plan to deal with skewed data? You state suitable approximations will be used, but you would need transformed effect estimates from the paper or individual participant data from authors. Transformed data and untransformed data should not be combined.
4. A more suitable reference is needed for reference 36.

Major comments
1. Subgroup analysis – you state that if relevant data are reported and permit a quantitative synthesis you will perform subgroup analysis. However in the paragraph above you do not state how you will synthesise data and state that it is unlikely data will be combined. If you plan to meta-analyse data you need to give more detail i.e. what model, what timepoints, which training programs will be combined?
2. Heterogeneity – can be assessed by visual inspection of the forest plot. As well as I squared, confidence intervals need to be calculated or you need to look at Chi squared. Ranges are also needed for I squared and you need to define what you mean by substantial heterogeneity.