Reviewer's report

**Title:** Reporting of setting and health worker cadre among trials on antenatal iron and folic acid supplementation in pregnancy: a quality assessment based on two Cochrane reviews

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 8 April 2013

**Reviewer:** Vivian Welch

**Reviewer's report:**

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

Yes, the question is new and well-defined as focusing on whether nutrition trials report characteristics of health care workers (cadre) and settings. This build on a body of evidence about poorly reported intervention characteristics (Glasziou et al).

A bit more detail in the background about what is known about the question being posed - ie on health professional cadre and setting - were these included in other studies such as those by Glasziou et al?

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

Yes, the trials were selected from two systematic reviews considered to be typical. Details are sufficient.

It is not clear why the authors retrieved the excluded trials from these reviews, since the work seems to focus on included trials only.

**It is not clear how the authors decided on which characteristics to extract descriptive data; they state “setting and health worker cadre (Table 1). One author (RH) reviewed the full text of each report and of associated studies if cited and extracted information relating to the setting – including type of healthcare facility and its geographic location, additional descriptive details of the facility and the population – and information about the health worker cadre who delivered the intervention – including level of training, any intervention-specific training, and the presence of supporting cadres or supervision.”**

But, they do not state how or why these details were chosen.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Yes, data are well-presented, controlled. This is a descriptive study of 81 trials.
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes, the manuscript authors have attached a PRISMA statement with the pages filled out, following standards for reporting.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes, the discussion is well-founded in the data, however some statements appear to go beyond the data collected.

In the discussion, the authors state: “For example, in this study it appeared that trial authors regarded the technical aspects of micronutrient supplementation including dose, formula, timescale, and delivery method, as elements of the intervention that deserved description” However, this study did not describe whether these other elements were well-reported (i.e., the dose, timescale, delivery method). I suggest the authors either describe these characteristics in their results if available, or remove this comparative sentence.

In the conclusion, authors state: “This study confirms that trial reporting is still not ideal.” This may go beyond the data in the study since this study is focused on nutrition trials not all trials, and also focused on two very specific elements of reporting - cadre of health professional and setting.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title does not describe the results. Also, the title mentions a “quality assessment”, but “quality” is not mentioned further in the manuscript until the discussion. If the authors intend to assess “quality of reporting”, then this should be described in the methods, and the standard for “high quality” should be given. I.e., do the CONSORT guidelines for pragmatic trials described in the discussion have a recommendation for reporting the cadre of health worker and setting that could be used to measure whether the trials in these studies adhere to these guidelines?

7. Is the writing acceptable?
Writing is very high quality.

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

None- I think this paper is a nice, descriptive study that adds to the literature.

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

-I suggest the authors explain how the criteria for reporting were chosen, whether this is an assessment of quality (i.e., are these standards in the CONSORT or TREND statements).
- Also, the manuscript conclusions sometimes go beyond the data in the study, and revisions would be helpful in this regard.

- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

**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.