Reviewer's report

Title: Incidence, prevalence, and occurrence rate of infection among adults hospitalized after traumatic brain injury: study protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis

Version: 1 Date: 12 July 2013

Reviewer: Susanne Hempel

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for submitting this protocol to Systematic Reviews. Please consider the following comments:

The PROSPERO registration number should be added to the abstract.

Generally, the use of abbreviations should be minimized throughout the manuscript to improve readability.

I would suggest searching CINAHL for pertinent studies.

A test run of the search strategy would be very helpful to decide whether the search strategy is too restricted - studies may report the number of infections but may not use incidence or prevalence terms in the title, abstract, and keywords of the publication.

The intervention criterion should be added to the inclusion criteria to specify which interventions patients may receive in studies that are eligible for inclusion in the review.

The comparator criterion seems out of place (if it is optional it is not a criterion determining the eligibility of studies).

I would suggest to limit the outcome criteria section to a description of what studies have to report in order to be included in the review. This includes deciding how you are going to proceed with studies reporting only composite outcomes of adverse events. The data extraction and analysis, e.g., how a cumulative incidence will be calculated, should be explained in the analysis section.

It may be useful to have a separate synthesis section in the protocol to outline how the body of evidence will be evaluated and which criteria will be applied, e.g., number of studies, consistency of estimates across studies etc.

The funding source and the role of the funder in the review process should be explicitly stated.