Reviewer's report

Title: The bibliometrics of systematic reviews: analysis of citation rates

Version: 1 Date: 29 July 2013

Reviewer: Karl J Sweeney

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revision

The questions posed by the authors were not well defined and need to be clarified. There is a large volume of literature examining the relationship of JIF and the citation rate of individual papers. Are the authors attempting to prove that the IF of journals publishing systemic reviews/meta-analyses display a different relationship with article citation rates compared with other types of peer reviewed papers? Unfortunately this paper is not designed to answer this question.

Discretionary revision

The authors could investigate the difference in citation rates between those published in dedicated review journals and more generalist journals a bit further. This is a genuine measurable difference between two groups of articles in their dataset and based on the limited results they present could yield interesting results.

The characteristics of the systematic reviews that the authors chose to include in the study appear quite scattershot. I am unsure why the length of an article is chosen over the nature of (or the general applicability) the question asked in the review. Perhaps the authors could explain this.

Major compulsory Revision

Meta-analysis and systematic review are not interchangeable terms and I would therefore question the appropriateness of the search strategy. It is either a study of systematic reviews alone or not and the entire text needs to reflect which it is.

Discretionary Revision

I also question why the authors chose to include Cochrane reviews when they did not meet the criteria for all the other articles included. Please explain how this does not lead to bias.

Discretionary Revision

The issue of study numbers and quality in Cochrane reviews is commented on in the discussion, unfortunately the authors did not apply the same critical analysis to their own study: there is no description of the number, quality and design of individual studies included in each systematic review.

Major Compulsory Revision
The title fails to identify JIF as a key element of the article and its conclusions. It makes no mention of the fact that meta-analyses were included in study.

Discretionary Revision
The writing is good and there is a decent synopsis of the literature in between the introduction and discussion however it lacks novelty and an in depth critique of the findings of the study.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests