Reviewer’s report

Title: Methodological developments in searching for studies for systematic reviews: past, present and future?

Version: 2 Date: 6 August 2013

Reviewer: Ruth Foxlee

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Minor Essential Revisions
1. p. 6 – A brief explanation of the MEDLINE re-tagging project should be provided
2. p.11 – This section which is speculative which is reasonable but the language is a bit repetitive, a lot of things are “likely”.
3. p.11 – examples of current cross-database searching options would help the reader here.
4. p.11-12 – I think the point being made is that cross-database searching could be really useful if the results retrieved agree with the results retrieved if the databases were searched individually but I had to read that section several times to be sure.
5. p.14 – an explanation of “capture-recapture” would help the reader here
6. p.17 – the Collaboration is already making use of the CT.gov dataset via the Cochrane Register of Studies.

Discretionary Revisions
7. p.5 – I’m not sure the section heading “Where we are now?: celebrating the first 20 years of Cochrane” is quite right. “Information retrieval methods in Cochrane: Celebrating the first 20 years” perhaps, but it’s a minor point.
8. p.10 – Are challenges around identifying data from unpublished studies not well understood or has the problem not been adequately quantified?
9. p. 16-17 – even though this does seem to be the trajectory, a reference(s) to back up the claims that trial data will be more in the public domain than it is now would be useful

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:

I work as the Trials Search Co-ordinator for the Cochrane Wounds Group, and
the Information Specialist at the Cochrane Editorial Unit