Reviewer's report

Title: Psychological treatments for common mental health problems experienced by informal carers of adults with chronic physical health conditions (Protocol)

Version: 1 Date: 22 November 2012

Reviewer: Kerry Dwan

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the study design appropriate?
The study design is appropriate but needs editing

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing?
Please see comments below that need to be clarified.

3. Is the planned statistical analysis appropriate?
Yes but more details are needed.

4. Is the writing acceptable?
The writing is acceptable.

Other comments

1. The word 'aged' is included in the first paragraph and is out of place.

2. Outcomes – what if the measure of depression or anxiety is a secondary outcome in a study? You also have to be careful of selective reporting as it may be that a study measures this but does not report it as the results are not significant.

3. Outcomes – Are you not interested in any other outcomes?

4. Study design – please edit the second sentence as this doesn't read well.

5. Study design – regarding the statement 'studies assessed as low or unclear risk of bias were included in the final analysis' – what item is this in regards to? Or is this an overall risk of bias? If it is overall, how will this be decided? You have already said you will only include studies of low/unclear risk for sequence generation and allocation concealment.

6. Search strategy – what do you mean by '>12 months'?

7. Methodological quality – how will you assess the quality of the primary outcome measures?

8. Methodological quality – study attrition is assessed within the Cochrane risk of bias tool already.

9. Effect size estimates – are you interested in post values or change from baseline? If you request pre/post values this won't allow you to calculate change from baseline.
10. Effect size estimates – more details are needed regarding heterogeneity.
11. Effect size estimates – the final sentence is not necessary as this would be obvious from the forest plot.
12. Publication bias – how many studies will be included for you to use this approach? There are other reasons for funnel plot asymmetry including heterogeneity and selective reporting.
13. How will you assess selective reporting?
14. Moderator analysis – the first two sentences need more detail i.e what are the particular moderators? What are categorical moderators?
15. What will you do if there is missing data?
16. Will any sensitivity analyses be considered other than that stated? Will all interventions be combined?
17. Which timepoints will you combine data at?
18. Reference 34 has an extra bracket at the end.