Reviewer’s report

Title: Effect of Standardized Training on the Reliability of the Cochrane Risk of Bias Assessment Tool: a Study Protocol

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Reviewer: Isabelle Boutron

Reviewer’s report:

This is a very interesting manuscript reporting a study protocol of a trial evaluating an intervention to improve the reliability of the Cochrane Risk of Bias tool.

To topic is very important and only few research has been published on this topic.

However, some issues need to be discussed or clarified.

1) Intervention: the intervention is described in the text and appendix. However, the authors should clarify what are the differences between the guidelines provided in appendix 1 and the guidelines provided in the Cochrane handbook. Can these guidelines apply to all types of research questions or are they specific to systematic reviews on knee osteoarthritis. For example, what is the rational for the drop out rate <=10% for the section on incomplete outcome data. Finally, how will the intervention be disseminated if it works? Will the training session be recorded?

2) Comparator: The choice of the comparator is difficult in this study. The authors decided to have a minimal training in the comparator groups. This could underestimate the effect of the intervention. Another choice could be to give only the handbook to the comparator group. The impact of this choice could be discuss in details in the discussion section.

3) Contamination: Of course there is a risk of contamination in this study. The authors report how they will try to avoid it but they do not describe whether they will record any contamination.

4) Sample size: The sample size is very low (2 per group). How was the sample size calculated? It will be difficult to conclude on the beneficial effect of the intervention with such a small sample. It seems more a pilot study.

5) Outcome: Is the most relevant outcome the reproducibility or the accuracy of the assessment? The 2 reviewers could have a good reproducibility but not an appropriate assessment.

6) Minor comment: to my knowledge at least one trials has been performed to evaluat the impact of training on the assessment of the risk of bias of studies included in systematic review (Fourcade L, PLoS Clin Trials. 2007). It did not concern the RoB tool, but the principle were the same.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I am co convenor of the Bias methods group of the Cochrane collaboration