Author's response to reviews

Title: Early Economic Evaluation of Emerging Health Technologies: Protocol of a Systematic Review

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What are the Key Questions?
We've clarified the objectives of the systematic review in the revised manuscript.

Objectives
The objectives of this systematic review are to describe the characteristics of early economic evaluations of emerging health technologies, to understand the current practice of early economic evaluation, and to document potential methodological and reporting gaps in current practice.

This text is at the end of the introduction, but it is not really presented as Key Questions.

We postulate that there are important questions regarding the practice of early evaluation. The first question is why an evaluation is needed now, and if it is needed, what circumstances and what type of technologies would be germane to early evaluation. The second question is whether and how in what ways has early evaluation contributed can contribute to decision-making for product and policy development. If the evaluation is conducted too late, the results may not be useful to inform decision-making; if it is conducted too early, it is subjected to high uncertainty. The third question concerns the optimal timing of early evaluation. We set out to conduct a systematic review of early economic evaluation studies in order to better understand the current practice of early evaluation and in particular, to seek answers to these key questions.

We selected to keep the key questions as part of the subsection “Objectives” because we believe that there is a lack of reporting of the related information in published economic evaluation studies of emerging technologies. Readers and users of early economic evaluation studies would benefit from the related information as it leads to a better understanding of the decision context for using the study results.

And I don't expect to see in the published studies any that say "we conducted our early evaluation too late and so it did not inform decision-making." And in any event, information about whether an evaluation is too early or late does not seem to be in the list of variables to be collected from each article.

As far as we concern, identifying the lack of reporting details is a valuable exercise.

It seems to me from a brief reading of the protocol that the key question is "to describe the characteristics of early economic evaluations of emerging health technologies" which I realize is not a question but nevertheless seems to convey what the authors are going to find. Readers may benefit from having the authors make this clear.

I hope the highlighted text above addresses your suggestion.

A systematic approach was selected to comprehensively describe current practice, seek answers to the key questions and identify potentially related gaps.