Reviewer’s report

Title: A survey of prevalence of narrative and systematic reviews in five major medical journals

Version: 0 Date: 09 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Matthew Page

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have evaluated the frequency of narrative, semi-systematic and systematic reviews published in the five highest-ranked medical journals from 2015-2016. There are a few issues which could be addressed to strengthen the manuscript.

It is not clear why the current study is necessary. Many studies have evaluated the prevalence and reporting quality of systematic reviews (including the recent large-scale evaluation of the epidemiology and reporting characteristics of systematic reviews indexed in MEDLINE in 2014, which is not referred to at all in the current study https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27218655). It would help to articulate what gap in evidence this study addresses.

The distinction between "systematic" and "semi-systematic" is not clear. It is stated that "We also considered a review "systematic" when authors explicitly reported the intention to perform a systematic review in the title, abstract or any part of the text". However, in my experience I have come across many articles which explicitly reported the intention to perform a systematic review in the title, abstract or any part of the text, yet provide no details about the methods used. Hence, I would consider these "semi-systematic", not "systematic". I suggest to refine the definitions, and adjust the analyses accordingly.

It is unclear why ANOVA was used to evaluate differences between groups. Relative measures (e.g. risk ratios or odds ratios) with 95% confidence intervals would be more informative for readers. I suggest you re-run the analyses using these effect measures.

The number of "semi-systematic" reviews is documented, but it would be much clearer for readers to explain why they were semi-systematic. That is, indicate what the methodological characteristics of these articles were, as compared to the systematic reviews.

Data on the prevalence and citation rate of systematic, semi-systematic and narrative reviews is interesting, but the paper would be much stronger if it also summarised the methodological and reporting characteristics of each type of article.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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