Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 27 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Mhairi Campbell

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. The question is interesting and raises an important issue.

I recommend several major revisions. The first is to report the criteria for how reviews were categorised as 'systematic' and 'semi-systematic'. Currently, there is no list provided of the included reviews. Without exact details of how reviews were defined as systematic or semi-systematic, and without a list of the reviews included in the survey, it is difficult to evaluate the analysis. Currently there is not enough information to fully assess the validity of the study.

A further major revision is to make explicit the new contribution this manuscript makes to the literature; how the manuscript moves on from the study the authors cite by Montori and colleagues.

It would be good to have more information about the narrative reviews, particularly consideration of the type of questions or issues they addressed; details of when these may be useful (i.e. when the focus of the review is to facilitate discussion) and when these are inappropriate (e.g. when claims are made about overall effects of interventions). It is understandable that this survey was not able to include analysis of how the narrative reviews were used - but without some indication of this, it is not possible to know the intended use of those narrative reviews.

Further comments:

Page 4 Lines 2 to 14 It would be good to have citations for the information on methodologies of systematic and non-systematic reviews.

Page 5 Line 19 - It would be good to have a full list of the methodologies (included as supplementary material) that were used to categorise a review as a 'systematic review'.

Page 5 Line 34 - This section clarify should clarify the difference in categorisation between 'semi-systematic' and those reviews included as 'systematic' because the review used the word 'systematic' in the title, abstract or text - there could be many reviews that use the word but do not produce a review that is replicable.
Page 6 line 14 It is unclear why the number of authors in each review was included in calculations, other than a systematic review with only one author would have an extremely high risk of being biased. It would be good to include reasoning for including number of authors.

Page 6 line 24 Please provide the rationale for separating clinically orientated articles from population health or policy articles, this is not drawn out to any extent in the discussion. Was there a reason for separating?

Page 7 line 17 It's great that a list of excluded articles are provided as supplementary material. A list of the included articles is also necessary (as supplementary material) as without this, readers are unable to assess whether they agree with the inclusion criteria or the findings of this study.

Page 9 line 36 Clarify (in methods section) whether assessing risk of bias was an inclusion criterion for systematic reviews

Page 10 Line 24- The authors of this review should clarify whether their definition of systematic was the same or different from that of Haddaway et al.

Page 11 Line 17 - It would be good to have citations for discussion of the uses and values of narrative reviews.

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

No

**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.

Unable to assess

**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 recommend additional statistical review

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