Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency, cost and value of contacting study authors in a systematic review: a case study and worked example.

Version: 0 Date: 05 Jul 2018

Reviewer: Christian Nøhr

Reviewer's report:

The study evaluates the effectiveness, efficiency and value of contacting authors in systematic reviews. It is a very specialised niche for a paper and maybe of limited value to a broad audience.

The weak point in the study is how the value of contacting the authors are determined. Here it is determined if the added data is unique. However, data uniqueness is not necessarily adding value to the study. If the added data are of no relevance to the aspects central of the review they can be very unique, but with limited value.

The authors do not inform about when the reviewed studies were published. If they were published in the 80's or early 90's e-mail contacts can be difficult to obtain (P5, L9).

The time measurements are given in minutes and seconds. However, it must be assumed that the time spend on e.g. searching e-mail addresses is heavily depending on individual IT skills, and writing letters is depending on proficiency in English language. These aspects are not discussed. At least it has no relevance to provide time measurements in seconds.

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.

Unable to assess

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

No
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:

Acceptable

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