Reviewer’s report

Title: The judgement of biases included in the category “other bias” in Cochrane systematic reviews of interventions: a systematic survey

Version: 0 Date: 04 Aug 2018

Reviewer: Evangelos Kontopantelis

Reviewer’s report:

I must say I struggled to understand the point the paper was making and as much as I may be at fault for that, I guess at least some of the blame lies with the authors. Specific comments below

Major

1) the introduction is all around the Cochrane tool, understandably, but the authors fail to describe it and explain what aspects of bias ARE already covered.

2) The aims of the paper, expected at the end of the intro, are "... to analyze the scoring and support for judgement of the category 'other bias' in a large...". This is not an aim. "Analysing" is not an aim. "Support for judgement of the category 'other bias'" is also relatively meaningless - it is not clear how quantifying reported sources of bias and their variability or whatever will imply something and why. Not here, not in the methods section, not anywhere in the paper. What does the paper plan to achieve and how?

3) There is no justification for the study period. Why a year? why that year? what are the implications of that?

4) Language corrections are needed

5) "non-standard domains" are mentioned on page 6 and later, and we are not told what they are.

6) the outcomes section on page 7 was pretty confusing. the second sentence was not clear - needs to be rephrased to explain what are the characteristics, for example

7) the secondary analysis (primary analysis, first para, last sentence) is confusing. I could not follow what the authors meant and why.

8) The whole premise of the paper, although not explicitly stated as previously mentioned, is around variability in the "other" bias section. so what? Why is that a problem? the authors have failed to make this point throughout out the paper.

9) the manuscript is unnecessarily long (only descriptive statistics are reported) and unclear.
Minor

1) Title does not clarify what "other" bias implies. The title as it is, is meaningless.

2) Risk of bias tools so not apply to all systematic reviews, not all types of studies are covered by guidelines. Guidelines are outcome oriented, so meta-analyses are covered but not systematic reviews.

3) The number of reported RCTs will be smaller, since many will be reported in more than 1 systematic review. This needs to be clarified. if the authors accounted for that they need to report the overlap.

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.

No

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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