Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 17 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer’s report:

REVISION ASSESSMENT FROM THE ACADEMIC PEER REVIEWER:

Has the author addressed your concerns sufficiently for you to now recommend the work as a technically sound contribution? No

Reviewer comments: It's clear from the authors' comprehensive answers to the first two reviewers comments that considerable time has been spent on revising the draft but unfortunately I don't think my comments have been heeded by the authors in this revised manuscript and I now have further concerns about the reporting of this study as is discussed in the final paragraph.

Previous point 2. In this comment I have asked the authors to make it clear what types of bias would not be covered by the new version of the v2 RoB tool due to the omission of "other bias". The point of this request is to elaborate some of the types of bias that have been identified by the present study thereby strengthening the importance of the study by highlighting (even a few examples of, if not exhaustively listing) what, from this study, Cochrane authors had previously been recording as "other" which will not be accounted for when people use the updated RoB tool. The authors have not amended the manuscript to accommodate this request and therefore this limits the impact and recommendations of the study. Therefore I request again that, following line 378 of page 18, the authors list at least some of the types of bias that have been found by the current study which may not be covered by the new RoB tool.

Previous point 3. That's great that some published works can now be cited to support the current work.

Previous point 4. The authors have misread my comment. I asked the authors to be more "emphatic" and the authors have mistakenly interpreted this as "empathetic". By "emphatic", I wished the authors to be more bold and courageous in highlighting the weaknesses of Cochrane reviews found from this study, because Cochrane reviews are widely upheld as the gold-standard in evidence syntheses. As the authors have instead opted to make the manuscript "less harsh and more neutral" they have done the opposite of what this comment has requested. It was my intention to highlight that people should not be afraid to criticize Cochrane reviews and indeed it
is preposterous of the Cochrane Collaboration to think that they can censor such criticisms. As such, the authors changes in response to this comment have weakened their message and by being optimistic the manuscript will fail to urge the necessary caution required to ensure researchers pay attention.

Previous point 5. Thanks, that's a great help.

Previous point 6. I appreciate that the authors have sought help in revising the English in the latest manuscript, and I know it's not easy an easy task, but there are still frequent grammatical/language errors which it make it harder to read. For example, where it is written "In this study, we aimed to determine types and judgments of 'other bias' domain in the RoB tool in Cochrane reviews of interventions."

This should be written more like "In this study, we aimed to determine the types of bias and their corresponding judgements noted in the 'other bias' domain by review authors who used the RoB tool in Cochrane reviews of interventions.

Previous point 7. So, if all records screened were also verified by a second reviewer, this would amount to independent screening by two authors. I would like to know the outcome/agreement (e.g. kappa?) of this exercise, which is necessarily time consuming and, when I see such good practice, I am always interested in research teams that decide to use such methodology. I realise that this is a blinded peer review but I think that the initials of the two authors who declare that they independently screened all the records should be added to the manuscript at this point (and of course redacted for peer review purposes) in the spirit of research integrity and transparency according to systematic review principles. This is particularly relevant as the authors previously stated in response to Reviewer 2 that screening was not done in duplicate. This issue requires clarification and rather suggests some dishonesty in this amendment to the manuscript.

I was very supportive of this manuscript but the failure to properly consider my suggestions and the red flag in research conduct regarding reporting of screening is very disappointing.

**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.
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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

This reviewer has been recruited by a partner organization, Research Square. Reviewers with declared or apparent competing interests are not utilized for these reviews. This reviewer has agreed to publication of their comments online under a Creative Commons Attribution License attributed to Research Square and was paid a small honorarium for completing the review within a specified timeframe. Honoraria for reviews such as this are paid regardless of the reviewer recommendation.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report
including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal