Reviewer’s report

Title: Risk of bias judgments for random sequence generation in Cochrane systematic reviews were not in line with Cochrane Handbook in more than one-quarter of analysed cases

Version: 0 Date: 26 Sep 2018

Reviewer: Melanie Bell

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript discusses an interesting topic of research in the area of misclassification of bias in Cochrane systematic reviews (CSR). The aim of this manuscript was to determine how common misclassification of risk of bias was in relation to randomized sequence generation. Overall the manuscript lacked clarity and there were many issues which require major revisions.

Major Concerns:

1. The data extraction paragraph on page 6 did not provide sufficient detail to understand what terms were used to filter through the raw data

2. I had trouble following your Categorization methods (starting on line 34, page 7). There were many mentions of different categories (15, 19, then 5) which were not immediately clear upon looking at the results tables.

3. There are conflicting results throughout the manuscript. For example, authors mention 12% of trials were erroneously judged in line 6, page 11 and then on line 49, page 13 you mention that one in five judgment is erroneous.

4. Why was block randomization considered as "Method of randomization was not described"? Did the excel macro used to trim raw data simply look for the words "block randomization" and then trim away any possible supporting information? Block randomization and stratification are both desired characteristics in a randomization scheme, although details need to be provided.

5. Similarly, the authors present their findings as correct, how do they know they have not misclassified (as, I believe, the above example shows)? At the very least this should be acknowledged in the study limitations.

6. There were many grammatical errors throughout the manuscript. Perhaps consider working with an editor.
Minor Concerns:

1. You've cited unpublished data in the paragraph starting on line 10, page 5. Is there any published data on this topic?

2. The addition of a flow diagram may assist in understanding reasons for inclusion and exclusion of RCTs.

3. P4, L37. Perhaps the seven different domains should be introduced here, where they are first mentioned?

4. P6, L14. What do you mean by "advanced search"?

5. P6. Perhaps the code used for data extraction could be included in an appendix? Also, this paragraph was unclear to me.

6. P7, L2. The number of CSRs has been stated, but not the total number of RCTs, so there is no context for the number 1500. How many RCTs were included?

7. P7, L20. "Supporting comments" have not been defined. They should probably be introduced in the introduction, for readers who are not familiar with CSR

8. P7, L46. Missing the word "bias"?

9. P8, L46. "Same as above", "as above", etc. may be reasonable responses, but are not able to be classified through your method

10. "Mechanic method" should probably be "mechanical method"

11. P10, L5-6; L24-26. Unclear


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.

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:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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