Author’s response to reviews

Title: Reporting guideline for priority setting of health research (REPRISE)

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Author’s response to reviews:

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Professor Tamara Hughes

Editor-in-Chief
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Re: Reporting guideline for priority setting of health research (REPRISE) BMRM-D-19-00414.R1
Response to reviewers
Dear Professor Hughes

We thank the Editors and the two reviewers (Profs Sabine Van de Veer and Jacqueline Elisabeth Willy Broerse) for their helpful comments which we have used to improve our manuscript. These are addressed as follows:

Reviewer #1 – Professor Sabine Van de Veer

1. “Methods, pg 7: Include a brief summary of the 'sensitive search strategies' in the main text so that readers can get an idea of the key search terms without having to go into the supplement”

As advised, we have now stated: “We used Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) terms and text words for research priorities and combined this with terms related to reporting, conduct and evaluation.” (Page 7, paragraph 2 – marked copy)

2. “Page 10, lines 9/10: an example or further explanation of what may be considered 'credible leadership' would be helpful”

The source reference does not provide further explanation or examples. However, we have now expanded this statement for clarity: “This may require leaders who are trusted by stakeholders and who have the necessary expertise, knowledge, decision-making skills, and ability and deliver the project.” (Page 10, paragraph 2 – marked copy)

3. “Page 10, lines 58/59: could the authors provide 1 or 2 examples of particular situations/types of priority setting exercises where use -and therefore reporting- of a framework would not be expected?”

This refers to the use of frameworks for conduct (not reporting). We believe that priority setting exercises should be reported explicitly. We have rewritten to clarify that, “some priority setting exercises may develop and use a different approach, and not necessarily follow an existing or established framework.” (Page 11, paragraph 1 – marked copy)

4. “It is not entirely clear how to interpret item 25 (output) as a reporting recommendation. It is the only item in Table 1 not formulated as such (e.g. 'Describe how...'; 'State why...'). Does it refer to the fact that authors of priority setting exercises should state their approach to formulating the priorities (e.g. as a PICO, as a topic), so that it is clear what the priorities refer to? Or does it imply that authors should check that their priorities are formulated clearly (in which case some more guidance on how to do that would be helpful)?”

As noted, we have revised the statement to make clear that this item refers to stating the approach to formulating the priorities. “State the approach to formulating the research priorities” (Table 1).
5. "Discussion, page 16 lines 19-41: I am unsure what the authors are trying to get across with the last paragraph of the Discussion. Is it about items that have been missed but might be relevant in future updates? Is it about supporting evidence for some of the items already included? Or about something else entirely? It would be helpful if the authors could state in the first sentence of the paragraph what its key point is and how it relates their findings."

We confirm that we are referring to the possibility that items not currently included in the framework may be relevant in future updates, and that further discussion may be needed. As stated, we have added the following sentence at the beginning of this paragraph: “We acknowledge that there may be other potentially relevant items that could warrant further discussion, consideration, and evidence to support their inclusion in subsequent revisions of this framework.” (Page 16, paragraph 3 – marked copy)

6. “Minor textual errors: (a) Abstract - first sentence of Methods paragraph: „for were searched” needs to be removed; (b) Background, pg 4 line 15: ‘was prioritized’ should be ‘were prioritized’.”

We have made the corrected accordingly.

Reviewer #2 Professor Jacqueline Elisabeth Willy Broerse

7. “P2, line 17: ’We searched electronic databases and relevant websites for were searched for sources.’ Something is wrong here.”

We have corrected the grammatical error. (Abstract)

8. “P4, lines 39-44: Please number the four objectives for clarity as (1) ... (2) .... (3) ..., and (4) ....”

As suggested, we have now numbered the objectives. (Page 4, paragraph 2 – marked copy)

9. “P4, line 39: ‘meets’ should be ‘meet’”

As noted, we have made this correction. (Page 4, paragraph 2 – marked copy)

10. “P5, line 33: Yes, it is true that there are frameworks and guidelines available for conducting and evaluating research priority setting and there are no published guidelines for reporting. But this should not be interpreted as if research in these areas is not needed anymore. I am participating in the PARADIGM project that amongst others investigates frameworks for evaluating research priority setting exercises. We found that there are very few frameworks and they mainly focus on process criteria and indicators and very little is available on outcomes and impact.”

We agree that further work is needed to investigate and develop frameworks for evaluating the outcomes and impact of research priority setting. We have now expanded this statement to: “… evaluating research priority setting, which mainly focus on the criteria related to the process rather than the outcomes and impact of priority setting.” (Page 5, paragraph 3 – marked copy)
11. “P10, line 31 and 38: As one of the authors of the article on the Dialogue model, included in the study, I noticed here that under B) Governance and Team the Dialogue model was not referred to while it has clear emphasis on the issues of equity and facilitation. Could you please add reference [36] to line 31 “…equity[12,36].” And line 38 “… mixed stakeholders[5,36]. This also applies to p11, line 29 “… priority setting exercises[5,12,21,36,39]

As advised, we have now added the reference for the Dialogue Model to the three sections as indicated.

12. “P12, lines 26 and 46 present statements about "some priority setting exercises…", but no reference is made to any of the studied articles.”

As suggested, we have added references as examples to support the statements.

13. “P12, line 43 uses for the references the superscript typography instead of […].”

We have now corrected the formatting of the references.

14. “P13, lines 24-26 state ‘the use of criteria can add complexity to the process…’. I would like to emphasize that subsequently attaching scores to such criteria (as some do) followed by adding up the scores and prioritizing the research topics on the basis of the highest scores may sound rational but actually gives a false sense of objectivity.”

As suggested, we have now added a statement that “whilst assigning scores based on such criteria may be rational, there are concerns that it may give a false sense of objectivity.” (Page 13, paragraph 3 – marked copy)

15. “P15, on conflict of interest, it is relevant to explicitly request to address the possible influence of pharmaceutical companies on the research agenda setting process, given their close ties with both patient organizations and medical doctors this is by no means a hypothetical possibility.”

As advised, we have now made an explicit statement to address the possible influence of pharmaceutical companies: “For example, pharmaceutical companies may have close ties with patient organisations and clinicians, and the potential influence this may have on the priority setting process would need to be addressed explicitly.” (Page 15, paragraph 2 – marked copy)

16. “P15, line 22 explicitly states that ‘The REPRISE Guideline is intended to facilitate transparent and comprehensive reporting of research priority setting studies that involve stakeholders.’ However, in line 54 it is stated ‘The REPRISE Guideline may be used as a roadmap for designing, planning and reporting of research priority setting studies, …’. This is first of all confusing, but it is also not substantiated that the guidelines can be used for designing and planning (besides reporting). I would be very careful of making this claim, given that you clearly stated one sentence above that the guidelines do not say anything about the quality of the conduct in research priority setting studies. It only states the items that preferably are reported on and does not help someone in selecting from among several options the right course of action under certain circumstances.”
For consistency and clarity, we have now stated that “the REPRISE guideline may be used as a roadmap for reporting research priority setting studies, or to assess reporting…” We have deleted the terms related to designing and planning. (Page 16, paragraph 2 – marked copy)

17. “P16, lines 19-24: ‘A systematic review has found evidence for some of the items influencing decision-making about technical issues by mixed groups of people, and evidence for other factors that we have not seen specifically in the literature addressing decision making about research priorities[46].’ This is a rather cryptic sentence. I don't understand what you mean.”

We agree and for clarity, we have now removed this sentence. (Page 17, paragraph 1 – marked copy)

18. “P30, Table 1, number C 11: Please add the Dialogue Model when listing the other three models James Lind Alliance, COHRED, CHNRI, as you have also done in Table 2.”

As advised, we have now added the Dialogue Model in the list. (Table 1)

19. “P32, Table 2, Dialogue Model, Principles/Values: ‘Participatory, respect for experiential knowledge, dialogue between different stakeholders, emergent and flexible design’. So please add ‘between different stakeholders’ and ‘design’.”

We have now revised this statement in Table 2 accordingly.

Again, we appreciate the editorial and reviewer comments that have helped to improve and strengthen the manuscript. Thank you in advance for reviewing our revised manuscript and we look forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards
Prof Allison Tong, on behalf of all named authors