Reviewer’s report

Title: Managing Diagnostic Uncertainty in Primary Care: a systematic critical review

Version: 0 Date: 02 Jan 2017

Reviewer: Michelle Howard

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this systematic review manuscript. The importance of the topic is articulated by the authors and the paper could be a novel contribution to primary care literature with some revision.

The paper follows PRISMA guidelines for a systematic review and the review protocol has been published. Most of the methods appear to be robust i.e. search strategy, inclusion of articles and data extraction. However there is a shortcoming regarding the approach to the synthesis of results. It does not appear there was a pre-specified approach to synthesizing the findings of the included articles. It is not clear why the results are presented under headings of cognitive, emotional, ethical, or how/who assigned papers or results to these categories. Normally the results of a systematic review would be presented by type of study design, level of evidence, or at least by the issue addressed e.g. description of a phenomenon, factors associated with the issue, interventions to address etc. To avoid potential bias, the narrative synthesis approach should be described at the protocol stage to the extent possible. There should also be a description of the quality of the included studies. The authors have not described the synthesis approach at all. There is helpful guidance on ways to approach narrative synthesis by the Cochrane Collaboration (http://cccrg.cochrane.org/sites/cccrg.cochrane.org/files/public/uploads/AnalysisRestyled.pdf).

As written, it is difficult to follow the results section or to determine how much of what is presented is coming directly from the research evidence and how much is interpretation by the authors. The authors have done a lot of work to conduct this review, but the methods regarding data synthesis and the results would need to be revised to demonstrate that a rigorous approach was used.

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.

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Acceptable

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