Reviewer’s report

Title: Prevalence, aetiologies and prognosis of the symptom dizziness in primary care - a systematic review

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Reviewer: Marie Barais

Reviewer's report:

This article provides a systematic review of studies of the symptoms of vertigo and dizziness in primary care. The topic is highly relevant within primary care and, as a professional, I was very interested in the results.

I will follow the PRISMA check list, which should figure in the appendices.

The mention "within primary care" is lacking in the title.

In the abstract, the sections "study appraisal and synthesis methods; and systematic review registration number" are lacking.

In the introduction, definitions of "vertigo" and "dizziness" are lacking. This is my major criticism of this study. What kind of definition did the authors use? Did the authors want to focus on vertigo or on dizziness? Vertigo has a precise definition according to MESH: An illusion of movement, either of the external world revolving around the individual or of the individual revolving in space. Vertigo may be associated with disorders of the inner ear (EAR, INNER); VESTIBULAR NERVE; BRAINSTEM; or CEREBRAL CORTEX. Lesions in the TEMPORAL LOBE and PARIETAL LOBE may be associated with FOCAL SEIZURES that may feature vertigo as an ictal manifestation. (From Adams et al., Principles of Neurology, 6th ed, pp300-1)

Whereas dizziness is more subjective and vague: An imprecise term which may refer to a sense of spatial disorientation, motion of the environment, or lightheadedness. MESH.

They are two different symptoms according to these definitions and many of the difficulties encountered during the review could have been explained or justified in the introduction. It would have reduced the heterogeneity of the studies.
The method section is well described. All the Prisma sections are dealt with in detail. The quality assessment is very clearly described.

Results. The snowball strategy to gather 11 articles is not described. It is also surprising to have selected so many studies using this method instead of the search strategy. Could the authors explain why?

Discussion. I do not understand the first sentence of the discussion: "This systematic review identified 31 symptom evaluating studies about dizziness and/or vertigo at the primary care setting." The word "symptom" may be wrong here.

Because of the choice of both terms "dizziness" and "vertigo", the results and discussion cannot serve to clarify the topic following the systematic review. Dizziness is not a clear enough term to distinguish between neuro-otological and cardiovascular diseases. The study answered the research question but will not be useful in daily practice.

The appendices are particularly relevant, well described and provide a clear idea of all the processes used in the study.

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.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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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