Reviewer's report

Title: Diversity of infectious aetiologies of acute undifferentiated febrile illnesses in South and Southeast Asia: A systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 28 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Champica Bodinayake

Reviewer's report:

The systematic review on Diversity of infectious aetiologies of acute undifferentiated febrile illness in south and south east Asia, the authors had a successful attempt to address a very topical issue.

The methodologies used in this review are standard and has included publications from the last 19 years.

The following errors are noted in the methods section. in line 44 of the key words used in the literature search are aetiology OR aetiology where both words have the same spelling. As combining two identical words does not widen a boolean search, I doubt whether authors meant the word "etiology" instead of two similar words as "aetiology".

in line 49 and 54, Singapore is included twice, which needs correction.

in the results section there is inadequate description on laboratory confirmatory methods used in the studies overall. What pathogens were tested? What additional confirmatory tests were performed for pathogen identification? How many studies used blood cultures to confirm bacterial pathogens? Was HIV testing included in the studies?.

As diagnostics play a major role in the aetiology identification, inclusion of a summary of laboratory diagnostics performed in the studies need inclusion.
In the discussion part there is inadequate emphasis to the fact that nearly two thirds of the acute undifferentiated fevers remain still unconfirmed. The underlying reasons for the above such as timing the blood sampling, lack of convalescent sample, lack of validated cost effective point of care testing etc are not discussed.

The discussion does not include any statement how the results in Asia and South Asia differ from the global point of view.

The conclusions drawn form the systematic review needs major revision. There is inadequate synthesis of main messages drawn from the results and discussion to draw plausible conclusions. This section needs to be revised and strengthened.

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:

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.

I declare that I have no competing interests below

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