Reviewer's report

Title: Levels of Evidence: A Comparison between Top Medical Journals and General Pediatric Journals

Version: Date: 29 August 2014

Reviewer: Michele Hamm

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. Describing the current state of the literature in pediatrics is important in determining priority areas for advancing health research and the quality of the evidence in this population, and this study will contribute to those goals. My comments below are largely intended to clarify some of the points addressed in the manuscript.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Introduction: It would be helpful to include a brief description of what constitutes the LOE and CONSORT assessments and the purpose of each tool. A table might be useful.

2. Methods: I'm a little unclear on the screening and inclusion/exclusion process. My interpretation was that you searched the tables of contents of the 6 journals, published between April 2011 and March 2012, for relevant pediatric articles to include. Is this correct? Could you please provide some additional detail to clarify?

3. Discussion: Could you please explain why you used a subset of CONSORT items? The reference cited is for reporting abstracts - did you extract data from the full trials, or only from the abstract? Please clarify. Also, in the next sentence you mention risk of bias; however, this is a separate construct from reporting, and was not measured in this study. While complete and transparent reporting of a trial can help in assessing risk of bias, and may occur in concert with low risk of bias, the two are not equivalent.

4. Discussion: The Discussion is nearly all focused on the results from RCTs. Since other designs were included in the study, some interpretation of those findings would also be valuable.

5. Discussion: In general, the Discussion would benefit from more interpretation, rather than just reiterating the results. In describing the details extracted from each of the studies, there is more room to address why they were important to evaluate, and what each of the findings means in the larger picture. The conclusions are valid and important, therefore an explanation of the factors leading to them would strengthen the paper.

Minor Essential Revisions

6. Please add HICJ and GPJ to list of abbreviations.
7. Data Extraction and Synthesis: You mention extracting data on the "number of subjects/trials (latter used in meta-analyses)"; however, you don't mention including meta-analyses, only case series, case-control, cohorts, or RCTs.

8. Data Extraction and Synthesis: At the first mention of the CONSORT guidelines, please reference which version you are using. Also, in the last sentence of this section, I'd suggest rewording to ensure that it is clear that CONSORT is used to guide reporting of RCTs, not to assess them (as it reads now, it sounds like it is being used for quality assessment).

9. Discussion: Please check to see if the citation for reference 10 correct. I think it should be the DeMauro paper published in Pediatrics in 2011.

10. Table 1: Please spell out "Heme/Onc".

11. Table 3: Calling the general pediatric journals "low impact" is a bit misleading. They were selected on being the highest impact peds journals, so perhaps labeling the categories as General and Pediatric journals would be more helpful.

12. Table 3: Please specify what the mean LOE is describing (i.e., 2.01 on a scale of what?).

13. Figure 3 seems to be included twice.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.