Reviewer’s report

Title: Effects of dog-assisted therapy in adults with dementia: a systematic review and meta-analysis

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Reviewer: Gary Christopher

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BPSY-D-18-00812

Effects of dog-assisted therapy in adults with dementia: a systematic review and metaanalysis

ABSTRACT

The Background section is repetitive. What does "published from inception" mean (Methods)?

INTRODUCTION

The opening paragraph could be more clearly written, with better definitions and less use of brackets. The paragraph beginning, "Two recent systematic reviews have assessed," is again not at all easy to read for similar reasons. There is no explanation what GRADE methodology is and why it is relevant. Indeed, this section provided little rationale for the systematic review.

METHOD

There needed to be evidence of eligibility criteria here. What were the keywords used to search the databases? More was needed on the data analysis, such as effect sizes, heterogeneity, and so on.
RESULTS

Remove bullet-points. Nice summary table. Figures were helpful.

DISCUSSION

The writing here is clearer than in some of the previous sections. However, I am sure some of the statements made in the 'Certainty of evidence and implications for clinical practice' sections can be substantiated. In particular, the statement, "Even though most of the studies did not report information on costs of DAT implementation, we believe it might be expensive for some health systems, due all the resources needed," seems rather speculative. It might be correct, but I am not sure there is evidence here to back it up. Also, the statement, "DAT should not be used routinely as a therapy for patients with dementia," seems a little preemptive given the flaws indicated in all the studies under review. One assumes a tighter-controlled study with better outcome measures might show some benefit, then again it might not. The conclusion seems a little strong given the current situation.

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.

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.

I am able to assess the statistics
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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