Reviewer’s report

Title: The correlates of chronic disease-related health literacy and its components among men: a systematic review

Version: 3 Date: 18 May 2015

Reviewer: Lindsay Kobayashi

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for inviting me to review the revision of this systematic review, which is much improved from the previous version and reads well. The well thought-through inclusion of a comprehensive definition of health literacy and addition of quality criteria for primary studies is much appreciated. However I still have substantial conceptual concerns, detailed in the next section:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Although health literacy is an important issue for men and men’s health, the justification for sole focus on men is poor. In the Introduction section, the authors provide a nice new paragraph (lines 96-106), but are still vague in practical terms about why health literacy may differ between men and women (i.e. which of the known correlates of health literacy may differ between genders and why). The implicit hypothesis of this review (which is only indirectly stated in the final conclusion paragraph) is that health literacy differs between men and women, but would this hypothesis not be better tested by including studies with both men and women so that a comparison group is available?

2. The first sentence of the Conclusion paragraph states a hypothesis that is implicit in this review, but which is not actually tested. This is confusing to the reader and makes it appear that the authors have not taken the correct approach to answer this question.

3. As the review stands, the correlates of men’s health literacy that have been identified are those that have previously identified multiple times in a large body of research. Subsequently, it is difficult to see how this review represents a new contribution to knowledge, especially given that all included studies were judged to be of weak quality and that the theoretical contribution of potential gender differentials in health literacy could be further developed.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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.