Reviewer’s report

Title: The effect of journal impact factor, reporting conflicts, and reporting funding sources, on standardized effect sizes in back pain trials: a systematic review and meta-regression

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Reviewer: Rafael Pinto

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting systematic review with meta-regression investigating the impact of journal impact factor, reporting conflicts, and reporting funding sources on standardized effect sizes in LBP trials. This review found no association between effect size and impact factor, reporting source of funding, or conflicts of interest. An interesting finding was the strong evidence of an association between effect size and the explicit reporting of ‘no funding’. I believe this study provides useful information for journal editors, researchers and consumers and will definitely guide future studies in this area. Having said that, I have just a few comments.

Minor comments

1. Methods (Page 3, paragraph 2): It would be useful in this section to give more details on the type of trials considered eligible for this review. Perhaps, list the comparisons that were suitable for this review. It was only in the discussion that the authors mentioned two types of trials: trials with sham/placebo comparator and trials with non-sham comparator. Give examples.

2. (Page 3, paragraph 2) Give the rationale for excluding non-inferiority trials. When trials were considered non-inferiority trials? I’m not convinced that in this area researchers make clear distinction between superiority and non-inferiority trials, particularly when comparing different types of active exercise.

3. (Page 8, paragraph 3) Can evidence from this review be used to support the following sentence “However, LBP research trials are more commonly funded by government and charitable organizations rather than by industry”. Did the authors collect data regarding the type of funder? As more than half (54%) of the trials reported some funding, it would be useful to know who are main funders in this area.

4. Have the authors thought to conduct a subgroup analysis looking at pharmacological interventions versus conservative interventions, assuming that trials investigating drugs are more likely to be funded by pharmaceutical companies.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
none