Reviewer’s report

Title: Can UK NHS Ethics Committees effectively monitor publication and outcome reporting bias?

Version: 2 Date: 21 March 2015

Reviewer: Mario Malicki

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. Here are my suggestions for its improvement:

Minor Essential Revisions:

L49 – Pb is not only caused by the researchers, it’s the state of today’s publishing and lack of effective mechanisms for checking protocols and data sharing. Suggest u rephrase this.

L66. REC has not been introduced as an acronym, so please add here the full term

L72 – in the UK, based on this sample? Suggest rephrasing this statement.

L137 suggest using 25 studies had more than one publication

Major Compulsory Revisions

L115 – please explain the stratification process

L120-121 – the search took almost a year, for 116 projects? - can you explain why? Later u mentioned its was a master thesis, but still this should not have taken more than a few days. Analysis and writing of the paper, yes, but the search itself? Where the researchers contacted based on contact info from REC, if not – why, please mention this in the manuscript?

L132 – please state the stat program used

L138 – could you analyse data based on year of application or publication, did any trends emerge?

L149 – 95%CI?

L150? How was Mean time calculated - from when – time of study end? Or application to REC? Please state it here as well, not only in the table.

L154 – Why? Please list there the reasons why additional 9 could not be studied.

L170 - please list in the methods stat. tests used to check for this

Table 1 – please provide details for other study types, as well as define what you mean as unknown – unspecified, unable to determine? Was this information obtained from published studies as well, or only REC application?
Discretionary Revisions:
I would advise changing the title to informative about your findings, the question asked is to lightly discussed in the paper t have such a title.

Please be consistent in your reporting, perhaps adding CI for all percentages and numbers reported.

For clinical trials did you check were they registered in a public registry (clinicaltrials.gov) and if the results have been listed there as well, if not please mention this in limitations?

Did you check for reported adverse effects? And their mention in the REC applications?

Conclusion – Would the job not be easier, if researcher had to forward their publications to RECs, with or without self evaluation tables?

Figures A, B, and C are not necessary if data is described in the text.

Newer sys reviews have been published on publication biases – suggest looking into them, and expanding the discussion/introduction - [1-3]

Also newest Declaration of Helsinki, has a greater emphasis on the role of REC, would recommend citing them and commenting on their suggestion vs yours.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review this paper, I hope my comments will be of use to you.

Kind regards,
Mario Malicki

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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