Reviewer's report

Title: Effect of telemedicine follow-up care of leg and foot ulcers: a systematic review

Version: 2  Date: 14 July 2014

Reviewer: Louise Forsetlund

Reviewer's report:

I was pleased to re-review this manuscript. I am satisfied with how the authors addressed most of my comments. I have just a few comments.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Study results, first paragraph. "The unadjusted forefoot healing time did not differ between the ..." The results for the two groups may have differed. You should state that the differences were not statistically significant (and that pertains to all results).

Discussion Chapter, first paragraph, 3rd line:
"The included study (47) is inconclusive with regard to whether telemedicine management of people with diabetes-related foot ulcers may be an equivalent alternative to traditional follow-up concerning the healing time of the ulcers."

Well, that is of course one way to say it, but it is a little imprecise. It was never specified in the included article any range of values for which the efficacies would be “close enough” to be considered equivalent, i.e. no equivalence margin was defined beforehand. That means, as I see it, that the study itself cannot be inconclusive on a question that was never asked. However, I suppose you could say something like "The evidence that we identified still renders it inconclusive whether telemedicine management of people with diabetes-related foot ulcers may be an equivalent alternative to traditional follow-up concerning the healing time of the ulcers"

Also, in the Chapter Study characteristics, fourth line, "The purpose of the study was to determine whether telemedicine follow-up of forefoot ulcerations was
equivalent to traditional ..." It is correct that in the included article it is stated that "To determine if the management of forefoot ulcerations through telemedicine is medically equivalent to ulcer care at a diabetes foot program" - but as mentioned above, that was not their research hypothesis if you inspect the Methods Chapter further. I think the authors have been imprecise in their use of the concept of 'equivalence'.

Minor Essential Revisions

Search strategy, first paragraph: The first searches were performed in October 2014 - update on May 16th 2014. Please check the dates!

Risk of bias, first paragraph, fourth line: I didn't quite catch the meaning of "Although this may not be feasible in practice..." I think it would suffice to state that: "In addition, the article does not state whether the outcome assessors were independent and blinded"

Data Collection: "We developed a data extraction form to record study characteristics" - should the last Word be followed by a : or a ; instead of a comma? Also, I suppose you may have included 'study design' in the data extraction form?

Discussion, first paragraph: "... a high risk of systematic error..." = systematic bias ? and perhaps you would consider deleting "... in the intervention groups."

Discussion chapter, third paragraph regarding complex interventions. I am not quite happy with this discussion - I see that one of the other reviewers requested this issue, so I suppose this reviewer also will comment on it. The content of a telemedicine intervention may vary by number of health personnel, their education, experience and skills, ability to interact with patients perhaps, and attitudes and a range of factors in the settings of any study. Therefore, it may be difficult to standardize, yes, and actually it may not be precisely the same intervention that we test across studies, and the intervention may be difficult to replicate/repeat and generalize across studies/settings (which will be of consequence for what you may summarize as one kind of intervention in a review). Accordingly, future randomized controlled studies should very carefully describe exactly what was done, rather than "allow a certain degree of flexibility in delivering the intervention... " I am not quite sure what that means! - for example: http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/tidier/

**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.