Reviewer’s report

Title: Association Between BDNF Levels and Suicidal Behaviour: A Systematic Review Protocol

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Reviewer: Evan Mayo-Wilson

Reviewer’s report:

This protocol is generally well written and addresses an important problem. I am not familiar with this specific area of research, so I don’t know if there are many or few studies likely to meet the inclusion criteria, and the authors may wish to consider my comments in light of their knowledge about the field.

Overall, the protocol should try to anticipate the decisions the authors will need to make in conducting their study.

The inclusion criteria potentially include a very wide range of studies (perhaps the first protocol I’ve seen to include post-mortem as well as community-based samples). It’s not clear from this manuscript how the authors plan to deal with (i) different study designs in (ii) different populations (iii) making different comparisons. I assume the whole range of potentially eligible studies would not be combined in a single meta-analysis, for example. What are the comparisons of interest, relevant subgroups, etc. and how will the authors deal with clinical heterogeneity arising from these different sources? They might solve these problems by narrowing the inclusion criteria to a more similar group of studies or by explaining how the review will deal with a very diverse group of studies.

How will the authors deal with different measures of suicidal behaviours and studies that include more than one measure? What about different time points?

Finally, the search strategy is very short but appears to include sensible terms. I wonder if this has been validated for studies of suicide or if there are validated filers for the area?