Author's response to reviews

Title: Use of ward closure to control outbreaks among hospitalized patients in acute care settings: A systematic review

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Re: Resubmission of MS: 1542940562176162 - Use of ward closure to control outbreaks among hospitalized patients in acute care settings: A systematic review

Dear Drs. Moher, Shekelle, and Stewart:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a second revised version of our manuscript “Use of ward closure to control outbreaks among hospitalized patients in acute care settings: A systematic review”. We have carefully revised the manuscript, taking into consideration the referee’s suggested revisions. Below, we listed each revision request in bold, followed by our response, and made the corresponding changes to the manuscript in the ‘tracked changes’ format.

In the tracked changes version, line 97, "Data extraction and analysis" section. After reading the section I could not find any text/description about the data analysis. Is the description somewhere else in the paper?

Thank you for raising this point. We have made some changes to this section to provide some clarity to the data extraction and analysis. We found no studies that included a controlled comparison between ward closure and other interventions and hence used only a descriptive and tabular summary of the findings which is outlined in the results. It was not possible or appropriate to conduct any meta-analysis. We did not explicitly state the latter but could do so if you think it adds further clarity from an editorial perspective. Please let us know.

We have added the following statements in this section for greater clarity. “The included studies were systematically reviewed and relevant data was extracted from each article on the following parameters: study design, setting and population characteristics, causative pathogen(s), details of ward closure, details of other outbreak control interventions, outcomes relevant to the review, including the number of patients colonized and/or infected, and the role of ward closure for controlling the outbreak were extracted and recorded by one of the authors..... Relevant extracted data were collated in a descriptive summary and tabular format based on the findings from the parameters listed above.”
In the discussion, I’m wondering whether the authors can add a limitation - the last electronic search was completed in July 2014, as such the review may not be entirely up to date."

We would like to thank the reviewer for bringing this limitation to our attention. We added this limitation into our discussion, beginning on line 401 as follows: “Lastly, the review is based on the last electronic search which was completed in July 2014, and as such the review may not be entirely up to date.”

(end of comments)

Thank you once again for providing us with the opportunity to resubmit our manuscript, and we look forward to a response at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards,

Holly Wong (on behalf of our team)