Reviewer’s report

Title: Network meta-analysis incorporating randomized controlled trials and non-randomized comparative cohort studies for assessing the safety and effectiveness of medical treatments: Challenges and opportunities

Version: 3 Date: 18 August 2015

Reviewer: Gordon Guyatt

Reviewer’s report:

Dear Editor:

The authors have answered all reviewers’ queries suitably and did well to incorporate all feedback. We agree with the decision to reformat the paper as a commentary. The paper is timely and a nice addition to the existing literature on network meta-analysis with observational studies. We have a few points to be changed at the discretion of the authors:

Discretionary revisions:
1. Lines 92-4: “…a NMA of RCTs…is not randomized evidence because the studies themselves were not randomized”. This sentence seems out of place here; the paragraph might be strengthened by removing the sentence or adding detail to put it into context.
2. Lines 183: Should be “…considerably more time, effort, and costs…”
3. Box 1, 2nd advantage point: By definition, an NMA assesses multiple treatments simultaneously, regardless of whether observational data is included. Rather, it is worth clarifying that observational data might improve network density and could connect disconnected networks.

This is an article of importance to the field and we recommend that the paper be accepted after discretionary revisions. The quality of the writing and the figures is more than acceptable. We have no competing interests to declare.

Sincerely,

Reed Siemieniuk, MD for Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:

We have no competing interests to declare.