Author’s response to reviews

Title: Adherence to Brain Trauma Foundation guidelines for management of traumatic brain injury patients: study protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Response:

Dear editors and reviewers

Thanks you for your time and effort in considering our manuscript for possible publication. Please see below our responses to the concerns raised by the reviewers. All modifications are highlighted in red in the revised manuscript.

Responses to reviewer: Kehu Yang

Reviewer's comment 1: The outcomes reported in the section of Objective should be removed and added to the Outcome in the section of Selection criteria.

Response: The outcomes reported in the section of Objective have been removed and added to the Outcome in the section of Selection criteria. Please see pages 4-5 in the manuscript.

Reviewer's comment 2. In the section of Selection criteria, the first three subsections, including Population, Outcome and Study design were the criteria of included studies. However, the criteria were described again in the fifth subsection named Study selection. The authors should remove the criteria in the Study selection and integrate them into the first three sub-sections.

Response: The criteria in the study selection has been removed from the study selection section and integrated into the first three sub-sections. Please see pages 4-6 in the manuscript.

Reviewer's comment 3. The including criteria and excluding criteria are not opposite. When screening the records, we only exclude the studies with special characteristics from the included studies. Thus, the two criteria, “animal studies” and “case reports”, should be removed in the section of Study selection. Because according to the including criteria, we will include the original researches, like RCT, cohort study, etc. which focus on the adherence of BTF guidelines about inpatients with BTF. So there is no animal study or case report that can be excluded from the included studies.

Response: “Animal studies” and “case reports” have been removed. Please see pages 5-6 in the manuscript.

Reviewer's comment 4. The descriptions about the patients and BTF guidelines are repetitive. They should be integrated into the first sub-section, Population in the Selection criteria.

Response: The descriptions about the patients and BTF guidelines have been integrated into the first sub-section, Population in the Selection criteria. Please see pages 4-5 in the manuscript.

Reviewer's comment 5: In the section of Quality assessment, the authors
reported “We will assess the quality of reporting using a checklist, which will be based on the TREND (Transparent Reporting of Evaluations with Nonrandomized Designs) statement to assess the reporting of interventional studies”. There may be a little bit error. In this paragraph, the authors want to assess the risk of bias of RCT. So the correct instrument used to assess the quality of reporting is CONSORT Statement. Meanwhile, what we make the quality assessment is to make clear there is any risk of bias during the conduction and performance of included studies which would influence the confidence of the results. So quality assessment of reporting of included studies may not be important for systematic review.

Response: The error has been corrected. The authors of this review acknowledge the difference between measures of methodological quality and bias risk and quality of reporting. The primary aim of the quality assessment was to investigate whether the methodological quality variation is associated with variation in the outcome. However, measurement of quality of reporting is another important indicator of the quality of presenting the studies conduct and findings. We do prefer perform both of them. Please see page 6 in the manuscript.

Responses to Reviewer: Alie Akl

Reviewer’s Comment 2: The Appendix does not seem to be cited in the text

Response: The appendix is now cited in the search strategy section in page 5 in the manuscript.