Reviewer’s report

Title: The Utility of Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX) in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Medical Education: protocol for a systematic review

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Reviewer: Jenepher Martin

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SYSR-D-17-000 Reviewer comments

Title: The Utility of Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX) in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Medical Education: protocol for a systematic review.

Authors: S M Hejri et al

Journal: Systematic reviews: SYSR-D-17-00034

Reviewer: Jenepher Martin

The authors have submitted a protocol for a systematic review of the utility of the mini-CEX assessment method in medical education. They note that "this protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Editorial Committee of the Best Evidence Medical education (BEME) Collaboration, November 2016." The protocol has been published on the BEME website.

The manuscript is logically structured with good signposting as to the structure by the use of headings. The 'Background' is rather lengthy as it includes a scoping review, commentary on other systematic reviews of the mini-CEX, and justification for aspects of utility to be included. This information is important context for the protocol that follows, however could be tightly edited to reduce length, increase clarity and maintain the focus of the paper for an intended audience of health professions educators. Additionally, the authors should either use a narrative style, removing dot-point formatting, or avoid narrative writing in this section if a list style is retained.

The scoping search has captured appropriate studies from multiple settings and populations and using a number of different methods, although the search strategy used for both this scoping and to identify previous systematic reviews is unclear at this point in the manuscript. The authors have identified a number of previously published systematic reviews, some related more generally to work place based assessment including mini-CEX and three to mini-CEX...
specifically. The authors' purpose may be better served by restricting detailed commentary to the previous reviews specific to mini-CEX. For some of the cited research the findings and conclusions could be more clearly stated.

As the purpose of the protocol for the systematic review is to explore the utility of the mini-CEX the justification for using van der Vleuten's framework for utility of assessment could be presented earlier in the 'Background'. Extended explanation relating to each element of the framework is redundant.

The methods section of the manuscript presents the proposed protocol for the systematic review. Relocating and incorporating all information related to the scoping search and the outcome of this (including table 2) to 'Background' would improve the clarity of the proposed protocol. This is work already completed which has informed the systematic review search strategy. The protocol itself is sound, however the manuscript requires significant editing to improve clarity of description and reduce redundancy.

The authors present a realistic view of the challenges that may be encountered in synthesizing data in the proposed review and these may limit the conclusiveness of the findings. Despite the potential limitations, the outcome of the proposed review is likely to be of interest to many health professions educators.

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