Reviewer's report

Title: Immediate versus delayed surgery for hip fractures in the elderly patients: a protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis

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Reviewer: Krzysztof Lach

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The systematic review and meta-analysis on surgical interventions for hip fractures is expected to bring impactful knowledge for clinical practice as this health problem pose an major public health concern. Elderly with this life-threatening event may often spend the rest of their lives being bedridden without an effective and timely medical attention, which generates high patient- and caregiver-related as well as economic burden.

The submitted protocol follows stringent methodological requirements and thus is expected to generate robust evidence. I would like to bring authors' attention to merely two minor points to consider followed by a general comment:

Page 7. Table 1. Exclusion criterion 'patients with initially missed hip fracture' appears a bit vague. The review would benefit from specifying that criterion.

Page 10, lines 215-6. Having exactly the same cut-offs for 'early' and 'delayed' surgery might be difficult given possible deviations from clinical practice guidelines, cross-country differences in clinical practice, and differences between centres within a country/region. It is advisable to make a judgment on the indifference margin for the 'early' and 'delayed' surgery time taking advantage of the clinical expert consultation via Delphi approach. Though the numerical difference will presumably appear, they might not entail significant clinical difference thus precluding from combining studies. Supporting sensitivity and heterogeneity analysis will shed more light on the validity of that approach.

General comment: I would like to point out the differences between the submitted protocol and PROSPERO with regard to e.g. age (≥60 years in PROSPERO, ≥65 years in the current protocol)

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