Reviewer’s report

Title: A systematic review of interventions to increase awareness of mental health and well-being in athletes, coaches and officials.

Version: 0 Date: 01 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Sean Grant

Reviewer’s report:

This article has the potential to provide useful information to those working in this area. However, several items need to be addressed, particularly with regards to the synthesis of findings across studies.

Specific comments below in order of appearance in the manuscript:

1. Abstract, methods:
   - Per PRISMA for Abstracts, the authors need to provide the eligibility criteria: "Study and report characteristics used as criteria for inclusion."
   - The authors should report the specific risk of bias tools used.

2. Abstract, results: Per PRISMA for Abstracts, the authors should report the:
   - "number and type of included studies and participants and relevant characteristics of studies".
   - "results for main outcomes (benefits and harms), preferably indicating the number of studies and participants for each. If meta-analysis was done, include summary measures and confidence intervals."
   - "direction of the effect (i.e. which group is favored) and size of the effect in terms meaningful to clinicians and patients."

3. Abstract, conclusion: The conclusions section should also include a statement relevant to future practice/policy (rather than just to future research).

4. Background: The background section would benefit from at least one paragraph specifically dedicated to what was known prior to this review about sport-specific mental health awareness programs and how they are thought to work.

5. Methods, eligibility criteria:
- The authors should provide an operational definition for quasi-experimental studies, as this is an umbrella term for many different types of designs.

- Please provide a reference/empirical support to substantiate the claim that dissertations are of lower methodological quality.

- The authors need to include a sub-section on the eligibility criteria for comparators in RCTs and QEDs.

- The authors should specify whether the used quality criteria for measures to be included, and if so what these were (e.g., specific psychometric properties).

6. Methods, search: Present reported a full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.

7. Methods, study selection: Please clarify whether (1) each included article had its data independently extracted by each of the two reviewers or (2) each article had its data extracted by only one of the two reviewers. If the latter, this single data extraction should be mentioned and its potential impact on the results interpreted in the discussion section.

8. Methods, data items:

- Please provide more details on the "significant study design methods that may influence the generalisability of study effects" and how these methods were determined (e.g., a priori set of methods).

- Given that the authors only describe cohens d in the methods section, please describe how binary outcomes were handled.

9. Methods, study quality: The authors need to add sub-sections to the methods section addressing PRISMA items 14-16:

- Synthesis of results Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g., I2) for each meta-analysis.

- Risk of bias ACROSS studies (the authors currently only discuss this study by study): Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies).

- Additional analyses: Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified.

10. Results, study characteristics: The authors should provide a few statements giving a clearer picture of characteristics across the body of evidence (e.g., how many studies were of each design, what types of sports participants were most frequent).
11. Methods, study results:

- The major weakness of this manuscript is a lack of synthesis of findings across studies. The narrative and tables read as a laundry list of findings study by study, with little-to-no information about the clinical significance of the results (i.e., the size of the effects) as well. The authors need to better synthesize results across studies to make it clearer what this body of evidence does and does not say about the effects of these mental health programs on outcomes of interest. Specifically, the authors at a minimum should report meta-analytic effect estimates for outcomes of interest using data from RCTs — or if not, provide a very strong rationale for why this was not done. The authors should also consider visual methods for summarizing their results for any narrative summaries (e.g., harvest or albatross plots).

- Please describe the measures in more detail rather than just stating "a range of measures were used".

12. Lines 291-292: The authors should double check the numbers in this sentence, or make clearer that number of participants for which gender was not reported.

13. Lines 299-300: This sentence ends abruptly.

14. Line 309: Table 3 is never referenced in the text

15. Results, risks of bias: The authors should provide statements synthesizing the nature of (lack of concerns) about each specific bias across the entire body of evidence. As phrased/presented, it's not clear whether the reader should be concerned that selection, detection, performance, or other biases are a concern or not when making inferences about confidence in results on intervention effects.

16. Results, outcome measures: Which results have strong versus poor outcome measures? As phrased/presented, the reader cannot connect information about intervention effects with information about whether those findings are from studies with risks of bias or low-quality outcome assessment. The authors should revise to make clear which results the reader should and should not place their confidence.

17. Discussion: The authors should update this summary of evidence section of the discussion after the above-mentioned recommendations for the synthesis methods/results are addressed.

18. Limitations: The limitations section mostly speaks to limitations of the body of evidence, whereas this section is supposed to focus on limitations of the review methods (e.g., single data extraction).

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