Reviewer’s report

Title: The macro-economic determinants of health and health inequalities - umbrella review protocol

Version: 0 Date: 28 Aug 2017

Reviewer: Nita Perumal

Reviewer's report:

The impact of macroeconomic policy on health outcomes is certainly important to assess and I find this umbrella review to be a very good step in the right direction. The background section is well-written and, together with the conceptual framework, ample justification is provided for the overall research question. The proposed review methodology is also of acceptable quality.

However, a major weakness of the proposed review is that, even for an umbrella review, the research question is far too broad. Neither the exposure of interest (ANY macroeconomic policy), nor the outcomes of interest (ANY health or health inequality outcome), nor the population of interest (ANY adults or children in ANY low, middle, or high income country) are focussed; they cover an immensely huge area of evidence that cannot be summarized or synthesized in sufficient detail in one umbrella review. The authors need to seriously rethink the scope of this review and make it more specific. Health inequality outcomes, especially, would benefit from being the focus of a separate review and limiting this review to a certain population subsection would also be beneficial.

Lastly, the authors have definitely followed the correct steps for preparing their search strategy (piloting, expert consultations, and ensuring tracer papers are in the results); however, the proposed MEDLINE search strategy is rather lacking in regards to the search terms for health outcomes and health inequality outcomes. Limiting the research question will allow the search strategy to be more focussed on one topic as well and will provide search results that give a more in-depth and detailed overview on that chosen topic.

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