Reviewer’s report

Title: The Association Between Mental Health Nursing and Hospital Admissions For People With Serious Mental Illness: A Protocol For a Systematic Review

Version: 0 Date: 15 Aug 2017

Reviewer: Clive Adams

Reviewer’s report:

Sorry for being slow.

This is fine - as far as it goes.

A. Tiny amendments

Line 19: "This review will explore for the first time......." - I disagree. I think people have explored this but your review has that particular focus.

Lines 27-31: not sure this paragraph adds much - we are not that interested in non-SMI in this paper and it might be that the Background would best start at line 32.

Line 122: I think this should be PsycINFO and the 'h' dropped.

Line 172: I think subgroup analysis is likely to be over-ambitious - but there is no harm leaving this.

B. Not so tiny amendments

I think this is likely to be a limited literature. I think the authors think so too or they would not be proceeding down the non-randomised route. However, it would seem very likely that the broadening of the criteria for entry to non-randomised trials will cause flooding in of bias that we will never be able to properly and confidently offset. This, the authors do recognise and are going to use the Risk of Bias too that is appropriate but do not really explain what they are going to do with the data gleaned from the risk of bias tool. Furthermore - if going down this route - there is the 'in-for-a-penny-in-for-a-pound' argument. Searches are likley to identify studies that are not controlled - surveys of nursing 'density' with outcomes of relapse over time. Requiring comparative studies will greatly restrict the potential data set - comparative studies using psychologists, for example will be exceedingly rare. However, identifying all studies that have cohorts of people with SMI, nursing data and relapse data could provide quite a large data set to explore nursing ratio/patient or nursing intensity against relapse would make this a much more sophisticated study. As it stands it will do a job but, I expect, still leave considerable questions unexplored that could have been explored.
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