Reviewer’s report

Title: Loneliness and social isolation causal association with health-related lifestyle risk in older adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis protocol

Version: 0 Date: 07 Jun 2018

Reviewer: Alessandra Bazzano

Reviewer's report:

Recently the impact of social isolation (SI) and loneliness (L) have garnered a lot of attention, making this paper of interest. The paper is well written. The aim of this study is to synthesize and assess evidence of the extent and nature of associations between SI/L and health related lifestyle behavior risks. The objectives are:

1. Establish the extent of SI and/or L on key health related lifestyle behavior risks, specifically alcohol misuse, smoking, physical activity, and obesity;
2. Asses the evidence for any causal relationships in any associations found;
3. Report whether association or causal relationships found between SI and/or L and health related lifestyle behaviors is independent of known covariates.

General comments:

The section on covariates need greater explanation and more plain language description of what the authors hope to accomplish by including this in the review, for readers who may be less familiar.

Have the authors considering including CINAHL and other databases, and if not, why not?

How will this compare to previous work such as that by Cattan et al. 2005?

In some text, the authors appear to be saying that at the end of this review the issue of causal relationships between SI/L and health risk behavior will be known. That seems like a lofty goal, and needs to be appropriately contained within the limitations of a review study.

How will the authors identify studies that have Negative, Null and Inconclusive Results, given the publication bias towards positive results? This should be an important point addressed.
Level of interest

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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