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: 1 Date: 12 Sep 2018

Reviewer: Thom Ringer

Reviewer's report:

Thank you again for the opportunity to review this interesting manuscript, the revised submission of which is much improved. The major substantive comment is at 190-192, which is to strengthen the grey literature search methodology.

I recommend "Minor Revision" to address further points below, most of which seek to improve clarity and consistency.

The comments provided to Author and Editor are identical.

4-5: "… loneliness and SI affect …" (S/V agreement)

5-8: "However, there has not been … behaviours." Revise for clarity.

12: "quantitative [observational] studies"

15-16: "Data will be extracted and assessed for quality" Technically, it's not the data that is being appraised, but the included studies themselves. Also, favour the term "critical appraisal" or "risk of bias assessment."

19: "… [risk of] bias …"
21 -22: "Finally, any associations identified will be analysed using the Bradford-Hill criteria to explore causal relationships which, if any exist, will be reported using a computed causations score."

55: "Evidence of their adverse impacts on mental health is particularly strong, including outcomes such as …"

59-60: "… a link …" Specify: causation or statistical association?

72: "… ill health effects …" replace with "… adverse health impact …"

79-81: "Secondly … effects" Can you site to evidence for this claim?

104: "lon[e]liness" (typo)

110: "Review literature" should this not be "Literature review" or "Review of the literature"?

129: "… the extent of loneliness and/or SI association on …" Revise for clarity.

132: "association or causal relationship" Technically, a causal relationship is a form of association; maybe "causal relationship or other form of association"?

144: "… any observational study …" I presume you have excluded interventional studies because none exist? If so, please state this.
176-177: "… that do not report empirical associations …" The way this is phrased, it sounds like you are excluding any negative studies (i.e., studies that look for but don't find an association). Rephrase to clarify that you're only excluding studies that don't discuss/explore/otherwise examine relationships between your core concepts.

190-192: "… grey literature …" I think you could expand this beyond just grey literature found in the databases. For more detail on how to conduct and document a grey literature search please see: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4619264/

306: "… associations and potential causal relationships between loneliness/SI and health-related behaviours …"

308: Among strengths, I'd also mention the diligent use of standard analysis and reporting instruments wherever possible (PRISMA, MOOSE, NOS, etc.)

310-311: "Additionally, reporting will be structured and comprehensive, including critical appraisal, narrative synthesis and, if appropriate, meta-analysis."

313-316: I think this could be written more persuasively to underscore the importance of this review.

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:

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