Author’s response to reviews

Title: Association of incident dialysis modality with mortality: A protocol for systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials and cohort studies

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Reviewer reports:

Additional comments from the Associate Editor:

1. The protocol registration should now be completed, please provide with revised submission

Thank you, this has been added.

2. The outcome is mortality, as stated in the title, but should be stated clearly again explicitly in the methods section. Are there any secondary outcomes to be examined? (eg technique failure, transplantation rates, quality of life)

Thank you. All of these outcomes are beyond the scope of this review, and require separate and specific planning and resourcing. However, we acknowledge that other outcomes are just as important as patient death, and in the setting of dialysis this particularly applies to quality of life. We have added an acknowledgement of this issue in the discussion, and call out the high priority of this as a separate piece of work, and highlight the potential difficulties in summarizing quality of life in terms of technical scope.
As an informal note, the team is quite keen to do this in the future, but this would be something to be done in 2020.

3. A large (or largest) RCT of PD vs HD was recently presented (the ChinaQ https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02378350). The authors might consider conducting the literature search after these results are available in the public domain.

Thank you. Mark R Marshall is one of the main China Q investigators and authors, which has already been presented in abstract form at the “Late Breaking Clinical Trials” session at the American Society of Nephrology Annual Scientific Meeting in 2018. The manuscript is under review and the team have full access to the results.

Reviewer #1: Marshall and colleagues describe a protocol for a systematic review and MA of RCTs and cohort studies assessing mortality outcomes for HD vs PD.

Minor comments:

Page 3, Line 85: "Since, new evidence....' is missing words.

Thank you, this has been rectified.

Page 5: PICO tables and eligibility criteria: For clarity, I suggest breaking this down into P-I-C-O subsections.

Thank you, this has been amended.

Page 8: Page 8, Line 198 - should reference GRADE at first mention

Thank you, this has been moved.