Reviewer’s report

Title: Patient prioritization tools and their effectiveness in non-emergency healthcare services: A systematic review protocol

Version: 0 Date: 07 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Mathieu Bujold

Reviewer’s report:

REVIEWER COMMENT

A very promising systematic review. Please find some suggestions below.

Title

* Considering that this protocol of this tool review excludes studies conducted in emergency setting, it would be relevant to specify in the title this study will review patient prioritization tools use in "non-emergency setting". E.g. "Patient prioritization tools in non-emergency setting..."

Abstract

* Also it would be relevant to justify (in the abstract Background sub-section) and specify (in the abstract Method sub-section) the "non-emergency setting" focus of this review in the abstract.

* Lines 58-60, I suggest to replace the "research question sentence" by a sentence presenting the triple aim of this review: "This review aims to: 1) ... 2) ... 3)...

* Line 60, you could save space deleting these sentences: "A systematic review of the literature will be carried out following PRISMA guidelines" and "Five electronic databases will be searched."

* Lines 61-62, it would be relevant to develop more this sentence or maybe add one: "Two reviewers will screen, select and extract the studies, which will be analyzed using a narrative synthesis method." (Eligibility criteria, appraise quality, extraction, synthesis?)

Background

* Line 76; you could save space removing this part of the sentence: «particularly for patients requiring medical services". 
* Line 79; these words could be removed: "That is why".
* Line 88, remove the " " around the word need.
* Line 88, please add a reference to define the concept of need. E.g. "A need can be defined as a gap between what is and what should be" https://decisionaid.ohri.ca/docs/implement/Population_Needs.pdf
* Lines 94-95, you could save space removing this sentence: "Patient prioritization methods are intended to improve fairness and equity in the delivery of care".
* Line 113, please add a reference to this sentence: "Instead, decisions may need to consider a range of factors with differing degrees of importance for the main stakeholders (the healthcare organization, the professionals, and the patients and their families)."
* Line 121, It would be more homogeneous to replace the "etc." at the end of the parenthesis, by e.g. at the beginning.
* Line 121, maybe choose one e.g. of "social factor" to be more homogeneous.
* Line 121, please add one e.g. of "other factor".
* Line 123, could you explain why "specific criteria tend to be more objective" ?
* Line 124, choose one e.g. of "outcome".
* Line 140, this part of the sentence could be removed: "Additionally".
* Line 147, this sentence could be removed: " In addition to reliability, validity is an important metrological property for prioritization tools."
* Lines 148-149, please add a reference to this sentence: "Validity refers to the extent to which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure and whether useful inferences can be made based on the measurement."
* Lines 149-151, please clarify this sentence: "Clinicians need to be confident that patients who are rated as high priority indeed have the highest priority needs, that is, that the tool demonstrates evidence of validity"
* Lines 149-151, please clarify or remove this sentence: "For example, Escobar et al. correlated scores between a prioritization tool and Western Ontario McMaster Osteoarthritis Index (WOMAC) questionnaire dimensions (quality of life measurement) to determine its validity [27]."
* Line 159, maybe replace "In addition to showing limited results in terms of effectiveness" by In addition to limited evidence".
* Line 165, please clarify what you mean by "current status".

* Line 168, maybe replace "In that context, the goal of this study is to systematically review the published evidence concerning:" by "This review aims to:"

* Line 169, maybe add "Identify" at the beginning of the point 1)

* Considering that this protocol of this tool review excludes studies conducted in emergency setting, it would be relevant to specify this in the research objective.

* Line 170, also add "Access" at the beginning of the point 2)

* Line 171, please clarify the point 3)

METHODS

* Line 174, replace "This protocol will be reported according to the PRISMA-P" by "This protocol follows the PRISMA-P".

* Line 176, this sentence could be removing: "The PRISMA tool is recognized internationally and is often used as a benchmark for the quality assessment of systematic reviews."

* Please add a line to specify if you will include qualitative and/or quantitative and/or mixed methods studies.

* Will you do a mixed studies review?

Data analysis

* Line 183, please add a sentence to specify how many potentially relevant database records you anticipate to find in all these databases.

* Line 184, I suggest to add a table in annex presenting the example of the research strategy developed for Medline.

* Line 187, this part of the sentence could be removed: "and will adjust the search strategy to achieve the best possible quality".

* Line 189-193, these sentences could be transfer after the line 182.

* Line 200, please reinforce the rational of the timeframe "from January 2000". Why not before 2000?
Maybe merge Inclusion and exclusion criteria section in one Eligibility criteria section

Inclusion criteria

* Line 204, generally a systematic review don't include literature reviews. If you will synthesize primary and secondary studies you will actually do an "Umbrella Review". See: Biondi-Zoccai G. Umbrella Reviews: Evidence Synthesis with Overviews of Reviews and Meta-Epidemiologic Studies. Springer; 2016.

Exclusion criteria

* Line 211, please link this choice "excludes studies conducted in emergency setting" with the background section and present it in the title and the abstract.

Maybe add a section on Data Management

* Following the point 11a of the PRISMA-P, you should describe the mechanism(s) that will be used to manage records and data throughout the review.

* Will you use reference management software (e.g. Endnote) ?

* How will you remove duplicates ?

* Will you use specialised systematic review software (e.g. DistillerSR)?

* Will you measure the agreement between reviewers (kappa)?

Study selection and data extraction

* Considering that this protocol of this tool review excludes studies conducted in emergency setting, it would be relevant to specify this in the research question.

* Line 215, after the first sentence add a sentence to give an estimation of how many abstracts of potentially relevant studies you anticipate to select for the second step.

* Line 220, after the first sentence, add a sentence to give an estimation of how many relevant studies you anticipate to finally select.

Data analysis

* I suggest you develop this section.
* For each sub-objective [1); 2); 3) ] you may explain how you will extract and then synthesize the data.


* Do you want to develop a theory of how the intervention works, why, and for whom?

* Why you choose this synthesis method and not another qualitative synthesis method?

* Will you use a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (e.g. NVivo)?

* Will you follow a deductive or an inductive thematic analysis or hybrid?

* Will you use a predefined themes (codebook) derived from a framework? If yes, which one?

I suggest adding a "Critical appraisal section"

* Line 233, specify which tool(s) you will use and why.

Discussion

* Line 238, I suggest to add "will" in this sentence "This systematic review WILL provides much needed knowledge regarding patient prioritization tools".

* Line 249, I suggest you develop a little bit more on your dissemination plan.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field that should be highlighted to relevant networks

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:
1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal

Were you mentored through this peer review?

No