Author’s response to reviews

Title: Risk of bias judgements and strength of conclusions in meta-evidence from the Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group.

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Version: 1 Date: 08 Feb 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Many thanks to the reviewers for their detailed and constructive feedback on this paper. A revision and substantial rewrite have been undertaken in response to the reviewer’s feedback. Point-by-point reply to the feedback is below.

Authors contributions and Conflict of interest should not be in the Title page
  Amended

Running head is not needed
  Deleted

Complete all affiliations with city and country
  Amended

Reviewer #1
The excluded 22 studies under PRISMA may be specified with reasons.
  Included

Figure 4 may be avoided, it may be explained only under text. Sometimes such figures might provide deceptive understanding.
  Deleted – the quality score has been removed.
Reviewer #2

Major Comment 1
Title amended

Major Comment 2
Text updated to ‘informs clinical practice’ or ‘does not inform clinical practice’

Major comment 3
Updated numbers. Please revert if still unclear.

Major comment 4
Analysis revised with “low risk” as the comparator. Additionally, “high risk” has been assessed independent of “unclear risk”.

Major comment 5
Thank you for this. A thorough review of all analysis has been undertaken.

Major comment 6
As above for comment 5.

Major comment 7
Based on commentary from reviewer #3 regarding the uneven impact of each ROB category, the quality score described in the initial manuscript has been removed from this submission.

Major comment 8
The bias created by these missing judgements is again highlighted. Unfortunately time did not permit us to review all studies again. Cochrane’s commentary on bias within the surgical domain often noted the improbability of blinding, though there was no mention of a default risk. We have not discussed this with the CCCG but perhaps could. The systemic challenges of surgical research are highlighted again.

Minor comment 1
Amended, apologies for this error

Minor comment 2
Amended

Minor comment 3
We have clarified the language, please revert if still unclear

Minor comment 5
An example has been provided. If it remains unclear we can explain further in the text.

Minor comment 6
We have provided more background and explanation of the subgroup assessment of laparoscopic surgery, along with more detail on the sample.

Minor comment 7
Quality score has been removed from this review.
Minor comment 8
Updated

Minor comment 9
We have added further explanation here

Minor comment 10
Removed

Minor comment 11
Citations updated and standardised.

Minor comment 12
Amended

Minor comment 13
Discussion has been revised.

Minor comment 14
Revised

Minor comment 15
Updated

Minor comment 16
Updated

Reviewer #3

Major comment; direction and size of effect
Updated

Major comment; discussion and conclusion
We have substantially revised the discussion and conclusion. We would welcome any further comments.

Minor comment; ROB and recommendation
Added

Minor comment; ‘real world’ data
Added

Minor comment; introduction
Introduction has been revised

Minor comment; add start dated
Added
Minor comment; recommendation strength wording
    In response to commentary from reviewer #2 the wording around conclusion type has been changed

Minor comment; Word cloud
    We have offered more background and support to the laparoscopic subgroup and the word cloud

Minor comment; quality score
    On review, we have removed the quality score. In order to provide a useful metric it needs to be able to incorporate a weighting. We will continue to work on this.

Minor comment; referencing
    Updated

Minor comment; kappa
    We have provided some more information on this area

Minor comment; inclusion of non-cancer papers
    The inclusion criteria was for reviews produced by the CCCG, which included non-cancer reviews.

Minor comment; new paragraph
    Added

Minor comment; strengths
    Added