Author’s response to reviews

Title: Influence of adjuvant antibiotics on fistula formation following incision and drainage of anorectal abscesses: A systematic review protocol

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Author’s response to reviews:

Associate Editor: please provide a clear rationale for including or excluding study types. Furthermore, you state that you will include published and ongoing unpublished studies. Please note that this excludes finished unpublished studies. I guess this is not your intention. Please revise.

Thank you for this suggestion. The section on study design has been redrafted to the following (line 147-153):

Given the assumed paucity of published studies evaluating the effectiveness of antibiotic therapy for the prevention of perianal fistula following I&D, we will purposely leave our study design criteria broad to get a comprehensive picture of the evidence to date. We will include all published interventional and observational studies that report an association between perianal fistula and antibiotics following I&D as a primary objective of the study. We will not pool across study types due to their differential risks of bias. Case reports reporting on one individual will be excluded from the review.

Reviewer #2: Thank you for the corrections already made.

Only in page 7

“Published and ongoing unpublished interventional (randomized controlled trials) and
observational studies (prospective and retrospective cohort studies, case-control, cross-sectional and case series) evaluating the role of post I&D antibiotics on the incidence of fistula formation will be included in this review. Case reports will be excluded.”

I suggest to maintain the search including randomised and quasi-randomised trials. If it is a systematic review, it must have a consistent justificative for using not randomised studies, as rare adverse events. For estimative of effect, it is not indicate the use of not randomised studies.

Thank you for this suggestion. We have made modifications to the section on study selection, specifying the broad nature of study inclusion criteria. Instead of specifying which types of interventional studies will be included, we have left it broad, stating (line 150-152):

"We will include all published interventional and observational studies that report an association between perianal fistula and antibiotics following I&D as a primary objective of the study."

Therefore quasi-randomized trials will be captured within our inclusion criteria.

Kind regards

Carolina.

Reviewer #3: The protocol submitted by Baker et al. is designed to investigate a very useful clinical question. I am convinced that findings from the final systematic Review would improve the Management of this difficult subgroup of patients.

Nice manuscript.

Please correct the spelling error in line 102, pg 5: resource / recourse

This correction has been made.

Thank you for considering our resubmission.

Sincerely,

Laura Baker