Author’s response to reviews

Title: Recruitment and retention of fathers with young children in early childhood health intervention research: a systematic review and meta-analysis protocol

Authors:

Elizabeth Keys (ekeys@ucalgary.ca)
Jill Norris (jmnorris@ucalgary.ca)
Emily Cameron (camerone@ucalgary.ca)
Katherine Bright (ksbright@ucalgary.ca)
Lianne Tomfohr-Madsen (ltomfohr@ucalgary.ca)
Karen Benzies (benzies@ucalgary.ca)

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Author’s response to reviews:

Response to Editor:

October 16, 2019

Dear Dr. Pieper:

We are pleased to submit our revised manuscript entitled “Recruitment and retention of fathers with young children in early childhood health intervention research: a systematic review and meta-analysis protocol” to be considered for publication in Systematic Reviews. We have revised the manuscript and feel it addresses the editor’s feedback. We summarize our manuscript changes below (also highlighted in green within the manuscript). We are grateful for the time and expertise in providing the review.

Editor

Please state how you will deal with different study types in evidence synthesis. RCTs and quasi-experimental studies can be treated in the same way, while single group pre-post studies might need to be treated differently (separately?) as they not result in an odds ratio, risk ratio or similar.

Response: Thank-you for your comments. Our review is unusual in that we are examining the recruitment and retention proportions of father participation in child health intervention research,
rather than the effect of the child health interventions themselves. We discuss how these proportions will be calculated on lines 145 to 166. We agree that different study types may be related to differences in these proportions, however, we do not anticipate the recruitment and retention proportions needing to be calculated differently based on study design. As such, we have attempted to clarify that the focus of the review is on recruitment and retention proportions by revising the following statement “Should the data permit, a meta-analysis of the recruitment and retention proportions will be conducted using Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA) software, Version 3.0.” (line 228-229).

Because different study types may be related to differences in proportions (i.e., fathers may be more likely to participate in one type of design versus another), we planned to include information about the study design during data extraction, as one of the components of “study characteristics” (line 204), allowing us to explore study design as one of the “study characteristics” that may modify recruitment and retention proportions in our planned meta-regression (line 251-253). Should a reviewer request that we assess the effect size of the intervention as a potential modifier of recruitment and retention rates (classified as an “intervention characteristic”, line 254), the software that we are using to conduct the meta-analysis (Comprehensive Meta-Analysis, CMA) has the ability to meta-analyze different effect sizes based on study design. We have added to Table 2 to help clarify the potential modifiers that could be assessed.

We hope that we have understood your comment and our in-text revision provide adequate clarification to the reader. If we have misunderstood, we would be grateful for any elaboration you could provide, as we are keen to ensure clarity for our readers.