Author’s response to reviews

Title: Measuring women's experiences of maternity care: protocol for a systematic review of self-report survey instruments

Authors:
Claire Marie Beecher (c.beecher1@nuigalway.ie)
Richard Greene (R.Greene@ucc.ie)
Laura O'Dwyer (laura.odwyer.1@bc.edu)
Ethel Ryan (Ethel.Ryan@hse.ie)
Mark White (Mark.White@hse.ie)
Michelle Beattie (michelle.beattie@uhi.ac.uk)
Declan Devane (declan.devane@nuigalway.ie)

Version: 1 Date: 23 Aug 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor and Reviewers,

Thank you for the feedback on the submitted article. We have addressed your comments and a summary of revisions are listed below alongside the changes, which have been included in red, in the resubmitted manuscript.

Response to reviewers

Reviewer 1;

Regarding the search strategy, it would be helpful to have a brief description of how this was developed and tested, and whether someone with medical librarian skills, or similar, was involved.

Thank you. Clarification has now been included about the development and testing of the search strategy.

I wondered why, for example, 'postpartum' was not in the strategy as a key word, and the choice to require adjacency of 'care' or 'service', when papers might describe 'healthcare' or other options. A justification would be helpful.

Thank you for this suggestion. The search strategy was an iterative process and was developed based on the authors experience (including an experienced systematic reviewer with extensive searching experience) and a review of strategies in related reviews. The strategy was then tested in three
databases and revised to achieve the best balance between sensitivity and specificity of retrieved citations. We have revised the manuscript accordingly.

Regarding the data extraction in table 3, it seems to me that the decisions about what to report for many of these items are quite subjective. What guidance will be provided to ensure clarity about these? Will direct quotes also be extracted from the papers as evidence to support the assessments?

Thank you for this suggestion. As per table 3, the full item lists of all survey instruments included within the systematic review will be retrieved and reported. The authors feel that this has been clearly described within the manuscript. In relation to the operational processes and feasibility aspects, we have further clarified that direct quotes will be extracted and that the phone interviews that will be held with lead agencies responsible for developing and distributing national/large scale maternity surveys will further expand upon this information.

I also have an overarching question about the importance of the context in/for which the tools were developed (and the purposes for which they were developed) and the extent to which this might impact on their utility and generalisability for other contexts. Variation in health system structure, level of health system, cultural expectations, resource levels, staffing models etc might have a significant impact on the results and how they were interpreted. It would be useful for the authors to reflect on this.

Thank you for this important comment. The context in which survey instruments that evaluate women’s experiences of their maternity care are developed and used is hugely significant. As you have identified, the variations internationally in almost all aspects of maternity care impact on the results of these surveys and how they are interpreted. The significance of this had been identified in the second paragraph of the introduction- acknowledging that these variances have, in part, contributed to the proliferation of instruments that seek to evaluate women’s experiences of their maternity care. As we acknowledged this clearly within the opening paragraphs, the authors do not feel that further discussion on this in within the protocol is necessary. We do, however, expect that following the review there will be sufficient evidence retrieved to facilitate a more in-depth discussion on this in the results manuscript. Data collected within table 3 will facilitate this.

Reviewer 2;

This protocol has a resemblance or potential overlap with an existing review by "Nilver et al. 2017 Measuring women's childbirth experiences: a systematic review for identification and analysis of validated instruments" (https://bmcpregnancychildbirth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12884-017-1356-y#Sec11) and perhaps the current SR review objectives could be addressed by the existing review. Could you please justify why this SR may be needed over the Nilver et al 2017 review?

Thank you for your suggestion. The authors are familiar with the review identified. The major difference between it and the review proposed in this protocol is that Nilver et al focus specifically on ‘childbirth’ whereas we propose a broader focus i.e., survey instruments that evaluate the entire antenatal, childbirth and postnatal areas. To our knowledge there is no systematic review that covers the focus that we have proposed. There is, therefore, a clear gap in the existing literature, necessitating the proposed review. The authors have again reviewed the objective of the Nilver et al review and are confident that the objective we propose is justified for the areas that we intend to focus on.
What is the rationale for the data cut off i.e. 2002 to 2018 - are these instruments developed them more relevant to current clinical practice or otherwise?

The start date for 2002 has been rationalised within the original protocol submission on the basis of no retrievable published maternity survey instruments had been validated up to this point (Messent, 2002). 2018 was used as a cutoff point up to the time of submission of the protocol to Systematic Reviews.

What is the rationale of utilising the COSMIN checklist for quality assessment in this review over others such as the Terwee et al checklist?

Thank you for suggesting the inclusion of Terwee- the Terwee et al checklist is encompassed within the COSMIN checklist. The COSMIN recommended criteria for good measurement properties has been included in table 2 with Terwee and Prinsen referenced as appropriate.

Please consider how the study results should be interpreted in light of the FDA 2009 guidance/guidelines on the use of PROMs - see link https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/patient-reported-outcome-measures-use-medical-product-development-support-labeling-claims

Thank you for this suggestion- the FDA guidance has not been included on the basis that Patient Reported Outcome Measures focus on the effects of treatments enabling assessment of effects of medical interventions on patients physical and emotional functioning and quality of life. This contrasts with women’s experiences of their maternity care and would therefore not be appropriate for inclusion.

Please utilise the Terwee 2019 pubmed filter as this could be useful in strengthening the sensitivity and specificity of the search strategies specially for the Medline database (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19711195?dopt=Abstract)

Thank you for this suggestion. This pubmed filter has not been included based on the rigorous testing of the existing search strategy and the resulting searches. This was not available at the time we planned this work and search has now been completed. Based on these results the authors are confident that all relevant articles will be captured. Additionally, as per ‘data screening’ the references of included papers will be analysed for additional literature on the theoretical, empirical and psychometric development of instruments not identified in the original searches, further strengthening the proposal by the authors that all relevant articles will be captured.

The authors suggest that the "results of this review will also inform the development and implementation of a self-report survey instrument to measure women's experiences of their maternity care within the republic of Ireland specifically", please elaborate further on why this setting of more relevance than others and how the results will be used within this setting contrary to others.

Thank you for this suggestion- we feel that clarifying the possible use of these results, as per your suggestion, has strengthened this paper and has given us the opportunity to highlight the usefulness of the results of the review internationally.