Reviewer’s report

Title: The reporting of progression criteria in protocols of pilot trials designed to assess the feasibility of main trials is insufficient: a meta-epidemiological study

Version: 0 Date: 02 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Emmanuel Effa

Reviewer's report:

General

This bibliometric analysis of published pilot trials and feasibility studies to ascertain the reporting of progression criteria adds to the understanding of various components of an emerging research area.

The motivation for the analysis is clear as is its conduct. It points to the need for more determined efforts at developing formal guidance for criteria for progression in pilot studies of trials.

Abstract
This has been well written and accurately reflects the corresponding section of the manuscript.

Introduction

The introduction reads well and authors have substantially provided an overview of key issues associated with poor reporting of pilot studies themselves. Outcome of pilot studies may include stopping for non-feasibility, continuing with modifications, continuing without amendments but with close monitoring and continuing without amendments exactly as the pilot had run. Could the authors indicate this several pathways for a broader understanding? Are there any examples of progression criteria that may be listed as well?

Methods

The authors have searched only three journals. Are there no others? 'Medicine' for instance

Results

Authors have labelled table 3 as 2. This should be corrected. They have also indicated in the text the 'results of both unadjusted univariate and unadjusted multivariable analyses'. There appears
to be an error as this is not in keeping with the results in Table 3. Please check as the multivariable analyses are reported with adjusted odds ratios?

Discussion

The discussion has been set in context and authors have provided an appropriate interpretation of the results.

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

An article of importance in its field

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

Acceptable

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No