Reviewer’s report

Title: Mapping the nomenclature, methodology and reporting of studies that review methods: A pilot methodological review

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Reviewer: Maria Sudell

Reviewer's report:

This was an interesting paper, and to assess current methodological reviews to standardise their reporting is an important area that needs work. This review is useful in that it shows a full review of MRs is needed.

Might the search strategy have missed studies that e.g. listed themselves as a "review of current methodology" or "review of methodology" rather than "methodologic* review"? Potentially expand the definition of methodological review? As reviews of methodology might fall into two main groups - reviews that highlight key references to give a short overview of the current methodological area, and systematic reviews that aim to identify all methods proposed / used in practice? A systematic review should include all identified references (so random samples / sample size criteria for generalisability might not be appropriate)?

It would be interesting in the section concerning generalizability to have a brief paragraph that gives a sentence giving justification / elaboration / examples for each characteristic used to class studies as generalizable or not - e.g. to show how a study would be considered to justify their sample size, or how a study was considered to only use a specific topic.

For the generalizability criteria, a study can only be considered generalizable if it selected a random sample of records - does this apply to all studies, or just those that selected certain references to be included in their review? What about systematic reviews that aim to include all identified references? This ties into the criterion for "justified their sample size" - again if taking a random sample of the papers then yes, sample size should be justified, but if including all records, would a study be penalised for not justifying a sample size / including a sample size calculation? (This is covered slightly in the discussion "Likewise, the approaches to the sampling should be explicit, especially in methodological reviews that do not adopt systematic searches to identify all the relevant articles." It is unclear whether the generalizability criteria potentially would penalise systematic reviews that include all available eligible records?

For not generalizable, for "used a specific topic" and "used very stringent eligibility criteria" it would be useful to have more information on how this was classified, with examples and reasons given? E.g. Would a review that looked only at a particular methodological approach be "used a specific topic", or would a review that only examined a particular clinical area be "used a specific topic"

It might be useful to have a separate additional table that lists the classification of each of these criteria for each paper you assessed, along with the evidence / quote used to make the decision?

For the flow chart, could a reason for the 198 records excluded be given (e.g. excluded as not MRs?)
Level of interest
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