Reviewer’s report

Title: Registration of randomized controlled trials in nursing journals

Version: 0 Date: 19 Jan 2017

Reviewer: Julia Rucklidge

Reviewer's report:

This is an important study that looked at registration of RCTs in nursing journals. While not original (there have been many such investigations in other fields) it is important to establish the extent of the problem in order to determine how to go forward in the field. On this note, it is worth citing other authors who have conducted very similar types of investigations in other fields. eg: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/acps.12647/pdf and http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0133718.

These results suggest that people who do research in nursing need to be educated on the importance of trial registration to prevent bias in the field.

In the methods, the authors describe the search strategy. They need to be specific that they did not look at all clinical trials (eg they didn't look at open label trials or quasi experimental trials like ABAB) so they can't declare that they looked at "all clinical trials".

I wondered if the search term "RCT" would actually capture the stepped wedge trials -shouldn't that term have been included in the search? Same with feasibility trials.

How were the journals chosen? Did the authors use a website to find the highest impact journals for nursing? What impact were these journals?

I am concerned about the grouping that was created, in particular "retrospectively registered after and before submission to journal". The problem here is that there is an assumption that the journal where the trial was published was the first journal where the trial was submitted. This is highly unlikely. So it makes this categorization significantly problematic. Unless this choice can be defended, it might be best to collapse and not look at the registration status based on submission to the journal.

For the "not registered" trials - did the authors follow up with emails to the authors of the studies to confirm that the trial was indeed not registered?

There are some spelling errors throughout the manuscript.
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