Reviewer’s report

Title: Selective citation in the literature on swimming in chlorinated water and childhood asthma: a network analysis

Version: 0 Date: 05 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Toby Lasserson

Reviewer's report:

This article is an interesting and well conducted assessment of the relationship between article/study characteristics and citation in a small but contested field of healthcare research.

I have only two comments that should be quite easily resolved.

1. Page 13 (line 312). I don't understand the meaning of zero positive in this context. Can another term be used here or a definition be provided in brackets?

2. More broadly I am unclear about the difference between selective citation and citation bias. This is the main conclusion and features in the title of the article. I have checked the protocol but cannot see a definition of either citation bias or selective citation. To me this is the equivalent of not defining an outcome you are interested in measuring before conducting an experiment. To overcome this please can both of these concepts be defined and explained in the Background section, or even in the methods? This is an important part of the take home message, and whilst I can see that there is some evidence for increased citation rate depending on the conclusions, I am not sure how this weakly supports the assertion of citation bias, when the evidence for selective citation is strong.

I would like to commend the author team for posting and linking to the protocol for this study. More research teams conducting methodological research of this nature should follow their example.

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