Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 31 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Adam Dunn

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. The authors have revised a previous version and have addressed most of the comments in a reasonable way. The authors have used citation networks to examine the potential for citation bias in studies on swimming in chlorinated water and childhood asthma, finding that authors are more likely to cite themselves and articles confirming the association. While the example is relatively small and may be skewed because of the study data constraints, the analysis was one of the most rigorous I have seen in the area. Rather than respond to each comment individually, I have only addressed the remaining issues.

Major Comments:

1. I think Figure S2 is useful and I would put it in the main manuscript, but is it possible to add arrows to the end to show the direction of citation (I know it is obvious but it helps), and if it doesn't ruin it, modify the lines to be straight? That may not work but I find the curved lines hard to follow. Would it also be possible to separate the two main groups of authors in the network to make the difference clearer and better aligned with the co-authorship network?

2. I am not familiar with "capitalization" in this context. Is there a better description for this concept that can be used?

3. The suggestion that "we see no reason why the citation dynamics in WoS would be different from other databases" is hard to justify and is speculation. The limitation is clear, so I would suggest removing that sentence and just explain that it would be useful in further work to examine the citation networks across the major databases. It also provides an opportunity to suggest that better linking in open and accessible databases would be valuable.

Minor Comments:

1. Table S5 has some issues.

2. Some of the changes have issues with language. For example: "It concerns the selective citation of studies based on their outcome." is a bit awkward and could be improved.
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