Reviewer’s report

Title: The role of geographic bias in knowledge diffusion: a systematic review and narrative synthesis

Version: 0 Date: 03 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Hector Pardo

Reviewer's report:

The authors present a novel systematic review of evidence exploring geographic bias in the peer review process. Authors properly justify the rationale for the review and present conclusions supported by the review results.

Given the nature of the research question, less stringent inclusion criteria could have resulted in the inclusion of interesting studies that could have better answered the research question. Authors should explain why they only included peer-reviewed articles. They could have searched abstracts submitted to congresses or conferences as part of this review. Of specific interest are abstracts submitted to the Peer Review Congress and to the Cochrane Colloquium. Authors should seriously consider reviewing abstracts submitted to these two conferences.

Regarding the methods section, authors should explain why only a single author extracted study data. Double, independent extraction would have been feasible given the expected small number of included studies. Also in the methods section, authors should explain that quality of studies would be assessed, instead of simply reporting so in the results section.

In the study title and in the methods, authors explain that they will conduct a narrative synthesis. However, in the results section they report that "The studies retrieved did not lend themselves to statistical comparison using a metaanalysis. Methodological heterogeneity was too substantial to allow for a robust, statistical investigation. A narrative synthesis was performed instead to describe the observed effects". If the authors decided to conduct a narrative synthesis only after reviewing the eligible studies, this should be specified in the methods.

Regarding the results, a table summarizing the main characteristics of the three included studies would be helpful. Regarding the discussion, the third paragraph on the discussion, page 17 line 1, should be moved to the beginning of the discussion. By doing so, the starting and main focus point of the discussion will be the review results.
Also in the discussion, it would be interesting if authors analyze how the review findings compare against the three descriptive analysis/literature reviews that were identified during the references screening.

Regarding style, there is a typo in the words "studies" in the abstract. In addition, the use of semi-colons throughout the paper should be revised in favor of using commas. The semi-colon should be limited to connecting two full sentences equal in position or rank or to separate lists with items that include commas. Lastly, there are several paragraphs that are too long. In order to improve readability, these studies could be broken down into smaller paragraphs to improve readability (see the introduction and the second paragraph in the discussion).

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

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Acceptable

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