

Peer Review File

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Review Comments A:

I read with interest the manuscript by Uzonna C. et al. entitled “Coronavirus disease (COVID 2019): Protocol for a living overview of systematic reviews”, attempting to systematically give an analysis of systematic reviews (SRs) and meta-analysis (MAs) regarding COVID-19, assess their quality, and identify the best synthesis of evidence. However, several flaws and questions are raised in this manuscript that need to be addressed and clarified.

Comment 1: The appearance of a new disease such as COVID-19 allows for the preparation of hypotheses and short articles because any contribution, as long as it is exposed following scientific logic and previous literature, can make an important contribution in guiding scientific research. In this sense, these articles (including some position papers) are more useful to the scientific community than robust MAs (at an early stage with little data obtained from clinical studies) that instead take time and do not meet the needs of populations under a health emergency. For example, a recent letter published by Lancet will positively impact clinical practice and scientific research more than many robust MAs.

Reply: Thank you for your kind suggestion. First, we are very agreeing with your comments, but the urgency of scientific question is not the reason why the quality of the article should be ignored (doi:10.1126/science.abc1731; doi:10.1111/eci.13222; doi:10.1016/j.jclinepi.2020.04.016). On the contrary, in these situations, quality should be paid more attention. For example, recently, NEJM and the Lancet retracted two “big” research on hydroxychloroquine. Second, Systematic review as a key evidence in clinical practice, its reporting and methodological quality are very important, and many publications have been published on various aspects (doi:10.1016/j.parkreldis.2019.11.011; doi:10.1002/bjs.10331; doi:10.1111/bjd.18528), and they pointed the possible consequences of these flaws (doi:10.1016/j.parkreldis.2019.11.011; doi:10.1002/bjs.10331; doi:10.1111/bjd.18528).

Comment 2: The article reports: “However, poor methodological guidance, selection report and duplications will pose significant confusion, and may even mislead practice, thus sources waste will be companied”. Please note that this is a problem of any articles.

Reply: Thank you for your kind suggestion. With regard to systematic reviews, methodological and reporting problems are may more significant than other study designs. Many guidance publications have been published, and they emphasized these significant problems (doi:10.1136/bmj.j4008; doi:10.1136/bmj.b2700; doi:10.1136/bmj.39590.732037.47; doi:10.1161/CIRCOUTCOMES.118.005212).

Comment 3: English revision is desirable.

Reply: Thank you for your good suggestion. The manuscript has been polished by an English

language editing company (<http://www.mogoedit.com/>), and the certificate has been attached)

Comment 4: The article has too many purposes. This make it confusing and inconclusive.

Reply: Thank you for your good suggestion. First, the present manuscript is a protocol for a “living” overview, therefore, considering the possible situations is very necessary in the full-text. Second, as a protocol, because there are no detailed data, therefore, to give a specific conclusion is not easy.

Comment 5: The discussion seems overall inconclusive.

Reply: Thank you for your good suggestion. The present manuscript is a protocol, there are no detailed data to support discussion, therefore, to give a detailed discussion and specific conclusion is not easy.

Review Comments B:

Undoubtedly, this study represents a novelty in the area of evidence-based medicine (EBM). Its topic is of utmost importance, especially when we talk about areas with a sharply increasing evidence like COVID19. Therefore, this topic is relevant and the authors rightfully underline the importance of a careful selection of systematic review and metanalysis when we deal with COVID-19. In fact, among what we have learned in this pandemic crisis is that it quite difficult to find a reliable source of information and it can be misleading and generate confusion among clinician dealing we a partially new disease like COVID19.

Comment 1: The title clearly describes the study design and the paper, overall, is well written. The abstract sums up the main contents of the work with coherence and effectiveness and the primary endpoint of the study are mentioned. The methods section reports all information about the study, along with inclusion and exclusion criteria Among the search methods, I agree with authors in not selecting papers using preprint websites to avoid the inclusion of less reliable manuscripts. The ethical statement is clearly stated. Results are clearly presented.

Reply: Thank you for your recognition.

Comment 2: I suggest adding the website to the references including the last access date (line 61)

Reply: Thank you for your good suggestion. We have given a website for this citation, the statement is always showed in its office website, therefore, we thought it is enough for readers.