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Reviewer A

Introduction

Introduction is quite long and the first part of rectal epidemiology is unnecessary.

Author's reply

Thank you for your comment, we have trimmed down the introduction in the revised manuscript for the better readability of the readers as suggested. The authors believe that the epidemiology of the problem needs to be mentioned in the introduction to highlight the gravity of the problem.

-Methods

Literature research:

- 1) Include time period of the literature research
- 2) Include word search, how many articles found? how many abstract selected? how many entire articles read? who performed the selection? who solved the conflict?
- 3) Inclusion and exclusion criteria have to be clarified
- 4) Which were primary and secondary end points?
- 5) Were data of cost of cost effectiveness studies included?
- 6) The meta-analysis performed is quite poor. I think more variables should be analysis such as benign vs malignant disease. Rectal vs colon cancer.
- 7) I think that also cost effectiveness analysis which include the quality of life so patients should be considered.

Author's reply

Thank you for your comments and suggestions and we have made the necessary changes.

- 1) We have made the necessary changes in the trial selection section and have incorporated your suggestion.
- 2) The search strategy has been shown in the PRISMA flow chart and therefore it was not mentioned in the manuscript to avoid duplication.
- 3) Inclusion and exclusion criteria have been clearly defined in the trial selection section of the manuscript.

- 4) Endpoints have been clearly defined in the trial selection section as advised by you. The authors appreciate your insight.
- 5) We have included the cost from cost-effectiveness studies comparing clinical and financial outcomes, they are listed in references as 30 and 34.
- 6) We appreciate your suggestion and apologise if the manuscript appeared poor. To compensate for this limitation, we have mentioned the diagnosis in Table 2 – Treatment protocol for included studies.
- 7) Thank you for this suggestion and the authors agree with this opinion. Unfortunately, post-operative quality of life was not compared in the included studies.

-Discussion

- 1) Discussion is too short.
- 2) Please report discussion based on study reported in literature.

Author's reply

- 1) Thank you for your comment and we have made the necessary changes in the discussion.
- 2) We have compared this manuscript with the existing literature in the discussion section as advised.

Reviewer B

1. In the Methods section, the author indicated that this is a meta-analysis. However, the title reported otherwise. If meta-analysis is used in this study, the article type will be Original Article. Please confirm the article type of this article.

2. "...twelve studies were found to have fair quality (24-34)."

There are only 11 references cited. Please confirm.

3. Please define Std. in the Main Text.

4. Figure 1

*An editable version in WORD format is required.

*The studies identified from databases can not be 4.

*The final studies included in review will be $13+37=50$ based on Figure 1. In the article, we did not see any additional search source other than the 4 databases reported. Another flowchart attached is suggested to be used.

*The numbers reported in the first paragraph of the Results section should be double-checked for accuracy and consistency with the figure.

5. Figure 2

*The caption in the figure can be removed.

*The definition of Lap/sx/Std./CI should be provided in the explanatory legend.

*The study by Włodarczyk was published in 2023 and Merola in 2020 according to the bibliography. Please confirm. If correct, the tables should be revised as well.

6. Figure 3

*The definition of CI/sx should be provided in the explanatory legend.

*The studies by Włodarczyk and Wei were published in 2023 according to the bibliography. Please confirm. If correct, the tables should be revised as well.

7. Reference numbers are suggested to be added in the tables. And the hyperlinks can be removed.

8. Table 1

*Replace “Country” with “Country/Region” to avoid any possible political issues.

*Laparoscopic and Robotic should each be arranged in an individual row.

9. Table 4: a table should not have multiple sets of column headers.

10. “(Tau2 = **347.74**; Chi2 = 29559.11, df = 11; (P = 0.00001; I2 = 100%) (Tau2 = 2.73; Chi2 = 832.21, df = 6; (P = 0.00001; I2 = 99%) among included studies. (Figures 2 and 3).”

“[standardised mean difference -4.60, 95%, CI (-5.90, -3.31), Z = 6.96, **P=0.00001**]”

“[standardised mean difference -62.34, 95%, CI (-75.14, -49.54), Z = 9.55, **P=0.00001**]”

The numbers marked in BOLD in the above sentences should be checked for accuracy and consistency with the figures.

Authors Reply

1. We apologise for the error and we confirm that this is an **Original article**.
2. We have made the necessary changes and we apologise for the initial error.
3. We have defined the term std in the main manuscript and have highlighted it.
4. We have attached a word format of Figure 1 as requested and have rectified the previous mistakes.
5. We have removed the caption as suggested, defined the abbreviations in the legend and changed the year of publications as needed.
6. We have added the abbreviations in the legend and have changed the year of publication as advised.
7. We have added the references in the tables as advised, the authors agree that keeping the hyperlink will improve the readability for the readers of this manuscript.
8. We have replaced the country with country/region to avoid any political issues and have added the separate rows as advised.
9. The authors find this comment helpful but agree that this will be the best way to represent the quality of included studies.
10. We have changed the errors in the data made bold and have highlighted for the editorial board.