

# Review of: "How many papers are published each week reporting on trials of interventions involving behavioural aspects of health?"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I appreciate the authors for their efforts in conducting the study. While the paper addresses an important topic, it is unable to deliver sufficiently on several fronts. Following are some points I would like to provide as feedback to the authors:

The abstract is good, but I feel the authors failed to effectively communicate the significance and relevance of their research in the introduction.

The selection of papers was not random, and the authors only screened the titles, not even the abstracts, to determine their scope. In a standard systematic review or meta-analysis, researchers often screen thousands of papers to make decisions about inclusion or exclusion. So I don't think screening a couple of thousand papers would be a particularly shocking task. It would have been beneficial if the authors had screened at least 10% of the papers (or a smaller percentage for papers that appeared after the trial filters were turned off) – perhaps 10% of each year. The sample size of 100 recent papers per year for both with and without filters is not proportional to the actual number of papers, which was almost 8 times higher when filters were turned off.

The search strategy used is limited as it only focuses on substance use and abuse and ignores other ways in which health behaviours can be operationalized. The authors themselves acknowledge that there is a wide range of ways in which health behaviours can be defined (p. 2), yet they failed to adequately capture this diversity in their research because of restrictive search terms. The use of MeSH terms to identify common health behaviours seems vague, and it would have been more impactful if the authors had selected one specific area, such as substance abuse, and focused their estimates on that. The fact that 81% of the 100 papers were in scope does not give me confidence that the results can be generalized.

The calculation of person-hours and cost is quite speculative and may be an overestimate. Additionally, the authors did not account for the speed at which even untrained researchers can improve, and the cost of labor varies by country.

The authors acknowledge the limitations of their sample size and estimates, but some of the limitations could have been addressed within the research itself. The authors assert that the main conclusion would still be the same, which I agree with, but considering the limitations, I am unsure about the magnitude of the number of papers reporting the effectiveness of interventions. I don't have any clear answers, and as a result, I have some reservations about the validity of the

findings.

In conclusion, while the study addresses an important topic, there are several areas where it could be improved to strengthen the findings and make them more robust. I appreciate the authors' efforts and hope that my feedback will be helpful in guiding their future research.