

Peer Review

Review of: "Hidden Ethical Conflicts: The Need for Progress in Evidence-based Medicine – A Living Review"

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Recommendation: major revision

The manuscript challenges the RCT-centric model of evidence generation and proposes PCTs, using concepts like “Form Follows Function” and the “Cube of Clinical Care” to advocate for real-world effectiveness and systems thinking! The core message is almost relevant, but the delivery is overextended, under-referenced, and methodologically loose...

Major Issues:

Big claims, weak evidence: assertions like “RCTs provide little useful information” or “most studies misalign form and function” are not supported with sufficient empirical backing. Cite meta-research or large-scale evaluations.

Abstract frameworks with unclear application: CCC, FFF, ESRLs, ok, they are conceptually promising, but too abstract... Show direct use-cases or implementation pathways.

Lacks structure and genre discipline: the paper reads as part-commentary, part-methods guide, part philosophical reflection. Choose a format and streamline accordingly.

Methodology gaps in PCTs: No clear account of how bias, confounding, or patient heterogeneity are handled! Bayesian methods are mentioned but not operationalized!

While reading the title, I thought of it, and then I confirmed that there is a superficial mention of “Living Review”: Why? Because despite claiming to initiate a living review, there is NO infrastructure, versioning logic, updating plan, stakeholder engagement model, or digital interface proposed! This is not a Living Review, nor is it designed to become one, to be honest! However, if you want to make it one, you have to specify the update frequency and governance (who updates it, how often?), show a data platform or

curation method for ongoing input, involve patient, policymaker, and clinician feedback loops, and/or include version tracking or a modular structure for revision... the least for such a review!

Overly academic language and digressions: The manuscript could be 30–40% shorter. Cut historical/philosophical detours that don't directly strengthen the central argument! They add nothing!

Minor Points:

Improve figure clarity and explanatory captions.

The abstract needs to convey the core message in 250 words: currently vague and overly layered!

Don't refer to design heuristics like FFF as natural laws without rigorous justification!!!

Bottom Line:

Interesting premise. Poor execution. Needs tighter structure, empirical grounding, a real methodological spine, and concrete steps if it wants to claim the mantle of a Living Review. Revise with discipline or reposition entirely!

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.