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Title	Screening for developmental delay in early childhood (ages 1–4): systematic review
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Reviewer 1	Bob Phillips
Institution	Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, Alcuin College, University of York, York, United Kingdom
General comments (author response in bold)	<p>This is a very neatly written summary of a well conducted systematic review on the cognitive/educational effects of screening for developmental delay in pre-school children aged 1-4yrs.</p> <p>The paper reports a (shocking) scarcity of evidence for this without undue fuss and in a very digestible form.</p> <p>The review highlights in the discussion that data on shorter term outcomes from screening programs are more prevalent; a more informative (but different) review could have taken data for short and long term outcomes, and sought to weld these together using more imaginative methods of data synthesis and provide, perhaps, a firmer basis from which to conduct new trials. (I realize this is essentially a "please do a different study" comment but can't help but write it.)</p> <p>RESPONSE: This is outside the scope of this review.</p>
Reviewer 2	Karen Lee
Institution	CADTH, CDR, Ottawa, Ont.
General comments (author response in bold)	<p>This is an interesting topic which highlights the gaps in evidence. Suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More discussion on the importance of research in this area <p>RESPONSE: In the conclusion, we've added a paragraph on the importance of research in this area: "Within pediatric health care, policy decisions..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In Background provide more information on what was the basis of CTFPHC recommendations in 1994 and whether evidence base has changed <p>RESPONSE: We've added a statement to the background to address this comment: "Over twenty years have passed since the last set of CTFPHC guidelines..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity on the research question. Is it an update to what was done in 1994? <p>RESPONSE: Key Questions for this systematic review have been provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More standard reporting of systematic review methods should be provided, PICOS, inclusion/exclusion criteria, data analysis plan <p>RESPONSE: Reporting of methods has been standardized: Key Questions, Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria, Search Strategy, Selection, Quality Assessment and Data Abstraction, and Statistical Analysis sections have been added</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comment in Discussion on the implications of limited evidence for informing CTFPHC <p>RESPONSE: This is outside the scope of our manuscript. The CTFPHC will release their own guidelines for screening based on the evidence in this review. Please see response to Reviewer #2, Comment #1.</p>