



PROSPERO users may use this content in their discussions with journals about publication of their full protocols

To whom it may concern,

PROSPERO provides prospective registration of systematic review protocols with health-related outcomes, capturing key aspects of design and methods. This service is provided free of charge. The aim is to increase transparency, reduce unintended duplication (as researchers can check whether their planned review is already being done by another team) and reduce the risk of bias (as peer reviewers and readers can check submitted manuscripts and publications against what was stated in the registration record).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, all PROSPERO records were assessed by a member of the PROSPERO team before being published online. This assessment included a check that the review was in scope, that required fields had been completed and that the record contained no text unrelated to the planned review.

PROSPERO has never provided peer review, and publication of a PROSPERO registration record does not constitute endorsement of methods.

Due to very significant increases in submissions and a decision to prioritise registrations related to COVID-19, PROSPERO has implemented an auto-processing system to ensure that records can be processed in a timely manner. Based on a series of automated checks, submitted records are either deemed ineligible and rejected, or eligible and published. **In this case, the record in question was deemed eligible and therefore published on our website. This record is fully visible on the public website and should not be treated differently as a result of being automatically published.**

Due to high demands and limited capacity, PROSPERO will not be retrospectively processing auto-published records. However, this should not affect publication of completed reviews. As stated above, PROSPERO has never provided peer review, and the accuracy of the content of a PROSPERO record has always been the responsibility of the research team registering the review. High-quality records will continue to speak for themselves whether they have been processed by a member of the PROSPERO team or not. Registration helps to improve transparency, avoid unintended duplication and reduce opportunity for bias. This remains the same even when a record has been automatically published.

Therefore, we hope that the journal will reconsider its decision not to accept publication of your protocol, if the only reason is because the original PROSPERO submission was automatically published rather than processed by a member of the PROSPERO team.

Kind regards,

The PROSPERO team