

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Effectiveness of interventions on healthcare professionals' understanding and use of conscience: A systematic review protocol.
AUTHORS	Lamb, Christina; Kennedy, Megan; Clark, Alex; Pituskin, Edith; Kirkwood, Ken; Babenko-Mould, Yolanda

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Fleming, Valerie Liverpool John Moores University, NAH
REVIEW RETURNED	31-Aug-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>I enjoyed reading this protocol. It is well presented and Dr Lamb has experience the area that merits her leading this work. There are minor typographical and grammatical issues throughout that a further good proof read should pick up. I have one concern and that is to do with the selection of health professionals. Why are pharmacists not included? Our recent research, and that of other colleagues, suggest that they are frequently having to make important decisions based on their consciences. It appears by their exclusion that a vital opportunity has been lost. Thus it would be useful to see a rationale for the inclusion of the three occupational groups chosen.</p>
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REVIEWER	Brenner, Jay SUNY Upstate Medical University
REVIEW RETURNED	23-Oct-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Page 4, Line 32: "HCPs consist of physicians, nurses, and midwives." I think that this grouping glaringly misses some other similar licensed independent practitioners, such as PAs, NPs, CRNAs, psychologists, etc., who may have similar episodes of conscience worth noting. If it is the intent of the researchers to only study physicians, nurses, and midwives, then they should simply say that, rather than implying that these three groups are a comprehensive grouping of health care professionals.</p> <p>Page 5, Line 28: The sentence beginning with "Specifically" is a fragment that needs to be fixed.</p> <p>Page 8, Line 10: Is "Stress of Conscience" synonymous with "Moral Distress?"</p> <p>Page 8, Line 44: Did the authors mean "2000" rather than "2020?" And was there really a "general lack of empirical research related to conscience prior to" that date?</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Prof. Valerie Fleming, Liverpool John Moores University

Comments to the Author:

I enjoyed reading this protocol. It is well presented and Dr Lamb has experience the area that merits her leading this work. There are minor typographical and grammatical issues throughout that a further good proof read should pick up. I have one concern and that is to do with the selection of health professionals. Why are pharmacists not included? Our recent research, and that of other colleagues, suggest that they are frequently having to make important decisions based on their consciences. It appears by their exclusion that a vital opportunity has been lost. Thus it would be useful to see a rationale for the inclusion of the three occupational groups chosen.

Author's response to Reviewer 1: Thank you for your review. At this time we are investigating the empirical, international research on physicians, nurses and midwives for reasons of feasibility and proof of principle. We have established relationships with research partners and are also limited by funding parameters which necessitates a focused scope of search. This is an initial systematic review and the PI is an emerging scholar in this field with a program of research that will be conducting multiple systematic reviews and research studies on this topic into the future and across the healthcare professionals suggested for inclusion. It is anticipated that findings from this initial review study will inform subsequent reviews across allied health care professionals and populations such as pharmacists.

I have provided a rationale for the inclusion of the three occupational groups chosen on page: 1, last paragraph.

I have attended to the typographical and grammatical errors throughout. Thank you again for your time and thoughtful suggestions to enhance our manuscript.

Reviewer: 2

Dr. Jay Brenner, SUNY Upstate Medical University

Comments to the Author:

Page 4, Line 32: "HCPs consist of physicians, nurses, and midwives." I think that this grouping glaringly misses some other similar licensed independent practitioners, such as PAs, NPs, CRNAs, psychologists, etc., who may have similar episodes of conscience worth noting. If it is the intent of the researchers to only study physicians, nurses, and midwives, then they should simply say that, rather than implying that these three groups are a comprehensive grouping of health care professionals. I have addressed this on page 1, last paragraph.

Page 5, Line 28: The sentence beginning with "Specifically" is a fragment that needs to be fixed. Thank you, completed.

Page 8, Line 10: Is "Stress of Conscience" synonymous with "Moral Distress?" No, they are distinct phenomena, thank you for asking.

Page 8, Line 44: Did the authors mean "2000" rather than "2020?" Thank you, noted on page 5 and corrected. And was there really a "general lack of empirical research related to conscience prior to" that date? In terms of empirical, human subject research related to conscience for healthcare

professionals in particular, yes. We focused our initial search for this protocol on this criteria to be more specific, as noted on page 5. For the full scale review, date limitations will be removed, as noted on page 6 thank you.

Author's response to Reviewer 2:

Thank you for your thorough and helpful review. I have responded to this reviewer's comments in the text of their comments above. Your time and considerations for enhancing our manuscript are greatly appreciated.

Reviewer: 1

Competing interests of Reviewer: none

Reviewer: 2

Competing interests of Reviewer: None.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Fleming, Valerie Liverpool John Moores University, NAH
REVIEW RETURNED	07-Jan-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	I liked the first iteration of this, but this one has been tightened and I feel it is totally appropriate for publication. One minor omission seems to be social workers. I think they would be relevant to include but absolutely not compulsory. I have just reviewed a meta ethnography on the subject. I imagine it will be published so look out for that. I look forward to seeing your results.
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REVIEWER	Brenner, Jay SUNY Upstate Medical University
REVIEW RETURNED	10-Jan-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	The authors have responded to the feedback in the first go-around appropriately and deserve publication.
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