



## Letter to the Editor

# Assessing the risk of bias and publication bias should be integral parts of the systematic review



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Dear Editor,

We have read with interest the article by McNamara MG *et al.* [1] entitled ‘Sorafenib as first-line therapy in patients with advanced Child-Pugh B hepatocellular carcinoma meta-analysis’ published recently in the Journal.

We have found some methodological issues in the article that deserve a commentary. The authors did not assess the risk of bias for the meta-analysis, which should be part of the conduct and reporting of any systematic review [2], as the PRISMA statement recommended and required. There are two kinds of study designs in included publications, randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and cohort studies. The risk of bias of RCTs should be reviewed by the new Cochrane risk of bias tool [2,3], while that of cohort studies by The Newcastle–Ottawa Scale (NOS) [4,5].

In addition, there are no funnel plots or other methods to detect publication bias, which also should be

reflected in the meta-analysis. If the authors failed to assess the publication bias because of objective reason such as too few included studies, the authors should explain it in the article [2].

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## Conflict of interest statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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