



## Letter to the editor

## A response to the recent well-being systematic review



Keywords:  
Nurse  
Well-being  
Systematic review

We would like to thank Jarden, Sandham, Siegert, and Koziol-McLain (2019) for their article entitled "Intensive care nurses' well-being: A systematic review".<sup>1</sup> It was read with great interest as it examines factors contributing to well-being, rather than nurses' ill-being. It importantly addresses the gap in well-being literature, which may propel future studies and development of workplace interventions. Despite its innovative approach, there were significant methodological issues that may have impacted the conclusions drawn by the authors.

For instance, there were several flaws with the study protocol. The lack of a registered protocol was justified by stating the use of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guideline. However, the authors fail to address the potential for bias this may cause and the improvement in transparency<sup>2</sup> when protocols are used. In addition, a sufficiently comprehensive search of the literature does not appear to have been conducted because there was no use of controlled vocabulary terms or use of related terms for keywords, as recommended by the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions.<sup>2</sup> Relevant studies may have been unintentionally excluded. Well-being appears to be the only outcome term searched; however, the PsycINFO Thesaurus suggests the following related terms: life changes, life satisfaction, quality of life, and work-life balance. This is important because well-being constitutes many facets and no consensus exists around a single definition.<sup>3</sup> Additional keywords such as [CCU OR Cardiac/Coronary Care Unit] should have been included to capture studies of critical care nurses. These issues also extended to inclusion and exclusion criteria. There was no rationale for why studies were excluded if findings did not independently report on nurses. Given that well-being of nurses has been shown to be influenced by the entire healthcare team such as physicians,<sup>4</sup> these inclusion and exclusion criteria need to be justified.

Another concern was that the authors did not search the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) database. We replicated the search in the CINAHL database using the string provided and obtained the highest number of identified records (3,742). Given the primary population of interest, inclusion of this database may have resulted in an increased number of studies relevant to the scope of the article. Although the review examined an important issue, the methodological flaws could not

be ignored. Therefore, the conclusions of this systematic review should be interpreted with caution.

**Author contributions**

Rumi Agarwal and Elsa I. Bravo had equal contribution to the letter. All authors contributed to the discussion and identification of methodological flaws found in the review.

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