



Commentary on: Quality of life in oropharyngeal cancer: a structured review of the literature

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Dear Editor,

We read the study from Roets et al. [1] entitled “Quality of life in oropharyngeal cancer: a structured review of the literature” with great interest and would like to elicit some points about the study. The authors focused on the oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma, that is, among the most common malignant tumors, with a prevalence of 3.7 per 100,000 populations worldwide [2], being a significant source of morbidity [3]. Besides the malignancy of cancer per se, the treatment, as Roets et al. described, can affect the quality of life and functional outcomes of these patients. The objective of Roets et al. review was to summarize the literature on quality of life in patients with oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma. However, the methodological approach chosen may fail to reach this objective, once the authors conducted a structured review in spite of a systematic review.

Systematic reviews aim to collate all evidence about a topic with explicit and systematic methods to minimize bias [4]. Accordingly, with the guidelines developed by the Cochrane Collaboration, the studies’ searches should seek high sensitivity, by using selected subject headings (for example, Medical

Subject Headings [MeSH] and Emtree) about the topic of the review and including synonyms, combining the terms with Boolean operators (such as “AND,” “OR,” “NOT”) [4]. There are three databases considered as the most important sources for health sciences studies—MEDLINE, EMBASE e CENTRAL (Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials) [4]. By another side, Roets et al. does not describe a structured search strategy and conducted their searches only in PubMed [1]. The Cochrane Collaboration states that a search conducted only in MEDLINE (which is the main component of PubMed) is not adequate [4]. On the contrary, the inclusion of national, regional and subject-specific databases, and gray literature are recommended [4].

The quality of life of cancer patients is an unquestionable highly important topic to discuss, and the study from Roets et al. [1] aligned with this necessity. However, we believe that the study only comprehends a part of the evidence about the topic, and the conduction of a systematic review, including a structured sensitive search in more databases, can provide a more complete view of the QoL in oropharyngeal cancer patients.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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