

Comments on Luo et al.

Dear Editor,

I read the interesting review study by Ying Luo et al¹ published in *The Journal of Pediatric Allergy and Immunology*. I used a 16-item Assessing the Methodological Quality of Systematic Reviews (AMSTAR) 2² appraisal tool to assess the methodological quality of this review. According to AMSTAR 2, it scored 11 items out of 16 while lost points from items 2, 12, 13, 14, and 15, which were related to the issues of the protocol of the study, the impact of risk of bias (ROB), the ROB in primary studies when interpreting/discussing the results, heterogeneity, and publication bias, respectively.

Adherence to a well-developed protocol reduces the ROB in the review. The authors should have shown that they worked with a written protocol through independent verification. Actually, the ROB is an important issue in the systematic review studies. The ROB result was not accounted in the study by appropriate analysis (meta-regression or subgroup analysis based on the ROB classification) nor was it into discussion part when interpreting/discussing the results of the review. No explanation of the source of heterogeneity was accounted in the discussion as well. In addition, this study is a huge literature review, but publication bias as small-study effects was not checked through appropriate tests such as the Begg and Egger funnel plot tests.³

This systematic review is a well-written work although there are some non-critical weaknesses. It is classified as "Moderate" quality based on AMSTAR 2, so it may provide an accurate summary of the results of the available studies that were included in the review.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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Reply to Dr. Yarandi

To the Editor,

We would like to thank Dr Yarandi¹ for his interest in our systematic review of the diagnostic value of atopy patch test (APT) in food allergy in children,² and for taking time to express his concerns about the methodology of our paper. We agree that adherence to a review protocol can reduce the risk of bias in the systematic review. Unfortunately, we did not have a formal independent protocol for this systematic review. However, we had worked with an outlined

plan for this systematic review, which includes aspects of question to address in the review; search strategy for identifying studies; data extraction plan; and quality assessment tool. We ensured strict compliance with this plan throughout the review process. We also agree that further analyses such as assessment of the impact of study-level risk of bias on the results of the review and exploration of source of heterogeneity can provide additional information regarding the