



Abstract

Project title

What resources should we search? Conducting a systematic, comprehensive search for systematic reviews in primary care.

Project details (max 250 words)

Reports of clinical trials should begin and end with up-to-date systematic reviews of other relevant evidence¹. It is essential that the search strategy use in a systemic review is comprehensive and unbiased; without this, a systematic review has serious limitations.

Strong evidence on the number and type of resources that should be searched to identify trials for inclusion in a systematic review is lacking. CENTRAL, MEDLINE and EMBASE are generally considered to be the most important sources to search for reports of trials² but many other sources are often included in searches. The rationale for searching specific resources is seldom included in reports of systematic reviews.

We plan to explore what resources are most commonly searched in systematic reviews evaluating interventions delivered in primary care. We will review the search strategies of such reviews, published 2013 to 2015, in the Cochrane Library and the two international primary healthcare journals with the highest impact factor in 2015. The reviews must include only randomised (RCT) and controlled trials (CCT). We will identify the most commonly-used electronic resources, explore why other resources are sometimes searched, and examine the policies of the leading resources that determine which journals are indexed.

We will produce brief guidelines aimed at authors of systematic reviews of interventions delivered in primary care to help them decide what resources to search. These guidelines will help shape search strategies that improve the quality of systematic reviews conducted prior to clinical trials, ensuring that trials are planned and designed based on a sound evidence base and that the results of trials can be incorporated easily and accurately into this evidence base.

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References:

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