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Rachel Churchill, Toby Lasserson, Jackie Chandler, David Tovey and Julian PT Higgins.

Key points

- **Authors should consult the MECIR reporting standards before and during writing up of their review.**
- **The reporting standards are compatible with key reporting guidelines developed by different bodies, including PRISMA.**
- **Abstracts and Plain language summaries need to be consistent with each other, and with the main text of the review.**
- **Clear and consistent reporting supports replication of systematic reviews and should make updating easier.**

Authors should consult these reporting standards before and during writing up of their review. Adherence to the standards will help authors to prepare an informative, readable review. It will also help to make editorial evaluation of their work efficient. It is especially important to declare and justify differences to the planned question or eligibility criteria, since these may indicate important changes to the scope of the review. Where any search, data collection and analysis methods used are different from those planned, this also needs to be reported and explained. The reporting standards are available from within Review Manager (RevMan) software according to the heading or subheading to which they relate.

Several reporting guidelines are already available for primary studies and systematic reviews, and have been compiled by the [Equator Network](#)[1]. MECIR standards are compatible with the core items in two key sources of reporting guidance for systematic reviews: the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), and the US Institute of Medicine's standards for systematic reviews.

Accurately summarizing the key findings of a Cochrane Review in its Abstract and Plain language summary serves an important purpose in knowledge translation. These standalone summaries help to convey the results of the review to a broad audience. Authors should take particular care to ensure that conclusions drawn in the main text of the review under 'Implications for practice' and 'Implications for research' take account of the strength of evidence presented in the review, and are appropriately distilled in the Abstract and Plain language summary.

Authors and editors should ensure that all parts of the review are succinct and readable, so that someone who is not an expert in the area can understand it. The published review needs to signpost and structure information clearly to help orientate readers. Review methods should be reported in sufficient detail that others are in principle able to reproduce the findings. Clear reporting of the eligibility criteria and methods will also help future efforts to update and maintain the published version of the review.

Rachel Churchill
Professor of Evidence Synthesis, University of York, York, UK

Co-ordinating Editor
Cochrane Common Mental Disorders Group

[1] [The Equator Network](#) is a Library for health research reporting that provides a searchable database.