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Deciding on and performing an update (U1-U11)

Planning the update (U1-U5)

Planning the update

	Standard	Rationale and elaboration	Resources
U1	<i>Reconsidering review questions</i>	Mandatory	
	Confirm or amend review question (PICO) and objectives.	<p>Consider whether it is important to modify or add new objectives to make the review relevant to its users.</p> <p>Consider whether the review will be split, merged with another review or otherwise changed substantially. If so, a new protocol might be warranted and the <i>MECIR conduct standards</i> should be followed rather than these <i>update standards</i>. It will be necessary to agree the approach to updating the review with the CRG.</p> <p>MECIR conduct standards C1, C2</p>	See Handbook Section IV.3.1 , Section 2.1 and Section 2.3
U2	<i>Reconsidering outcomes</i>	Mandatory	
	Confirm or amend outcomes of interest	<p>Consider whether it is necessary to modify or add outcomes to ensure all user-important outcomes, including adverse effects, are addressed. Define which outcomes are primary outcomes and which are secondary outcomes. Keep the total number of outcomes as small as possible. Consider core outcome sets where available. Prioritize outcomes that will be assessed with the GRADE considerations.</p> <p>MECIR conduct standards C3, C14-C18, C23</p>	See Handbook Section 1.5 , Section 2.1 , Section 3.2.4.1 , Section 5.4.1
U3	<i>Reconsidering eligibility criteria</i>	Mandatory	
	Confirm or amend eligibility criteria.	Changes to the review objectives (e.g. additional consideration of rare adverse effects, economic issues or qualitative issues) may require modification of the eligibility criteria, possibly extending the scope to additional types of studies.	
	<i>Planning the search</i>	Mandatory	

U4	Decide appropriate search methods	<p>There are four considerations in planning search methods for updates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes to eligibility criteria may require the search methods to be modified, or additional search strategies to be developed. 2. Additional sources might need to be searched (e.g. trials registers) if not searched for the last published version of the review. Consideration should also be given to the importance of searching data repositories and information available from regulatory agencies. 3. The update search (for unchanged eligibility criteria) will normally be limited to material added or indexed after the date of the previous search. The yield of the previous searches may be useful to decide whether the full search is repeated or whether only a subset of sources should be searched for the update. 4. The original database search strategies may need to be modified, for example by adding search terms, adding new database subject headings, or by removing unhelpful search terms that identified many irrelevant studies in the original search. <p>MECIR update standards U6 and UR3</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook Section IV.3.4</i></p> <p>Study flow diagrams in Cochrane systematic review updates: an adapted PRISMA flow diagram</p>
U5	<i>Reconsidering data collection and analysis methods</i>	Mandatory	
	Consider whether methods for data collection and analysis (including a GRADE assessment) need to be	Decide if changes are required to make better use of existing data or to incorporate new data by referring to the current	Planning GRADE and SoF tables.

	amended in the light of recent methodological developments.	<p>version of the Handbook. Recent developments in 'Risk of bias' assessment, statistical methods or narrative synthesis approaches may lead to more inclusive or more robust synthesis of the evidence.</p> <p>The GRADE assessment will require evaluation of risk of bias, inconsistency, imprecision, indirectness and publication bias. See MECIR update standard U11.</p> <p>If a 'Summary of findings' table is not included in the current version, decide on the main outcomes and comparisons to be included and ensure that the relevant data have been (or will be) collected. See MECIR update standard UR5</p> <p>MECIR update standards U9-U10</p>	
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Conduct standards specific to updates (U6-U11)

Conduct standards specific to updates

	Standard	Rationale and elaboration	Resources
U6	<i>Searching</i>	Mandatory	
	Undertake a new search	<p>An updated review must include an update search for new (or additional) studies. For issues to consider in planning the search, see MECIR update standard U4.</p> <p>The most recent search must be no more than 12 months (preferably six months) from the intended publication date, and the results screened for potentially eligible studies.</p> <p>See MECIR conduct standard C37: Rerun or update searches for all relevant databases within 12 months before publication of the review or review update, and screen the results for potentially eligible studies.</p>	See <i>Handbook</i> Section IV.4 and Section 4.4.10
U7	<i>Including new studies</i>	Mandatory	
	Implement conduct standards for study selection and data	MECIR conduct standards C39 - C51	See <i>Handbook</i> Section 4.4.6 , Section 5.3.6 , Section 4.6.3 ,

	collection for any newly identified studies (with updated criteria or methods as determined above).		Section 4.6.4 , Section 4.6.2 , Section 5.2 , Section 5.2.1 , Section 5.2.3 , Section 5.3.1 , Section 5.3.6 , Section 5.4.1 and Section 5.5.2
U8	<i>Reconsider previously identified studies</i>	Mandatory	
	Consider studies previously identified as included, awaiting classification, ongoing and excluded, and collect additional information from them if necessary.	<p>Ensure appropriate methodology is followed to select included studies and collect information from them.</p> <p>It will be necessary to establish whether any studies previously identified as ongoing have now been completed.</p> <p>Ensure that reasons for excluding studies are consistent with current eligibility criteria and methodological standards.</p> <p>A redesign of the data collection form may be required if review questions or objectives have been modified.</p>	
U9	<i>Assessing risk of bias</i>	Mandatory	
	Ensure all studies are consistently assessed for risk of bias.	<p>The updated review must include a 'Risk of bias' assessment of all new and previously included studies. If the previous version used the original risk of bias tool to assess randomised trials, consider whether or not to switch to the Risk of Bias 2 tool (see <i>Handbook</i> (version 6) Chapter 8), including how many randomised trials were assessed in the previous version, how many new studies are expected for inclusion in the update, how well it was implemented in the previous version and whether it is feasible to switch.</p> <p>MECIR conduct standards C52 - C60</p>	See <i>Handbook</i> Section 7.1.2 , Section 7.3.2 , Section 7.5 , Section 7.6.1 , Section 7.8.6 and Chapter 8 .
U10	<i>Synthesizing results</i>	Mandatory	
	Implement review synthesis methods (possibly revised for the update) according to conduct standards for synthesis, across all included studies.	MECIR conduct standards C61 - C73	See <i>Handbook</i> Section 6.2.1 , Section 6.2.9 , Section 10.5.3 , Section 10.10.2 , Section 10.10.3 , Section 10.11.3.1 , Section 10.11.5.2 , Section 10.12.1 , Section 10.14 , Chapter 11 , Section 13.4 , Section 15.3.1

U11	<i>Assessing the certainty of evidence</i>	Mandatory	
	Assess certainty of evidence using GRADE considerations of risk of bias, inconsistency, imprecision, indirectness and publication bias.	This must be applied to the full body of evidence for the key outcomes included in the updated review. The most convenient way to present GRADE assessments is in a 'Summary of findings' table. MECIR conduct standards C74-C75 and MECIR reporting standard R97	See <i>Handbook</i> Section 14.2.1