

Template text for search methods: Protocols

This document draws together best practice examples from the Cochrane Information Specialist community in relation to writing the search methods in a Cochrane protocol. The creation of MECIR standards for protocols is underway but in the meanwhile we have checked all of these examples against the MECIR conduct and reporting standards for reviews to infer appropriate search methods for a protocol. The Copy-edit Support Team have checked and approved the text.

C36 Documenting the search process (Mandatory)

Document the search process in enough detail to ensure that it can be reported correctly in the review.

Search methods for identification of studies

C19 Do not restrict by language or publication status (Mandatory)

We will search for all published and unpublished RCTs of [review subject], without restrictions on language or publication status and in consultation with the [group] Information Specialist.

OR

The [group] Information Specialist will conduct systematic searches for randomised controlled trials and controlled clinical trials. There will be no restrictions regarding language or publication status.

OR

We aim to identify all relevant RCTs regardless of language or publication status (published, unpublished, in press, or in progress).

Electronic searches

We will search the following databases for relevant trials:

- the Cochrane [group] Specialised Register; OR the Cochrane [group] Specialised Register via the Cochrane Register of Studies (CRS-Web);
- the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) in The Cochrane Library;
- MEDLINE Ovid (from 1946 onwards);
- Embase Ovid (from 1974 onwards);

We have devised a draft search strategy for RCTs for [core database] which is displayed in Appendix 1. This will be used as the basis for search strategies for the other databases listed.

We will search the following trials registries:

- The World Health Organization International Clinical Trials Registry Platform www.who.int/trialsearch.
- ClinicalTrials.gov www.clinicaltrials.gov.

OR

Published, unpublished and ongoing studies will be identified by searching the following databases from their inception:

- the Cochrane Register of Studies [group] Trials Register;
- the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) in the Cochrane Library OR via the Cochrane Register of Studies Online (CRSO) OR via the Cochrane Register of Studies (CRS-Web);
- PubMed (1946 onwards) OR MEDLINE Ovid (1946 onwards) MEDLINE Ovid (In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations); PubMed (as a top up to searches in MEDLINE);
- Embase Ovid (1974 onwards);
- ClinicalTrials.gov (www.clinicaltrials.gov) via the Cochrane Register of Studies (CRS);
- World Health Organization International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (www.who.int/trialsearch).

The subject strategies for databases will be modelled on the search strategy designed for [core database] in Appendix 1. Where appropriate, these will be combined with subject strategy adaptations of the highly sensitive search strategy designed by Cochrane for identifying randomised controlled trials and controlled clinical trials (as described in the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions Version 5.1.0, Box 6.4.b. (Handbook 2011)).

OR

We will search the [group] Specialised Register through contact with the Information Specialist using search terms relevant to this review. The [group] Specialised Register contains studies identified from several sources:

1. monthly searches of the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL);
2. weekly searches of MEDLINE OvidSP;
3. handsearching of XX-related journals and the proceedings of major conferences;
4. searching of the current year of Embase OvidSP;
5. weekly current awareness alerts for selected journals;
6. searches of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Clinical Trials Register (ICTRP) Search Portal and ClinicalTrials.gov.

Studies contained in the Specialised Register are identified through search strategies for CENTRAL, MEDLINE, and Embase based on the scope of Cochrane [group]. Details of these strategies, as well as a

list of handsearched journals, conference proceedings and current awareness alerts, are available on the [group] website.

See Appendix 1 for search terms used in strategies for this review.

Searching other resources

C29 Searching within other reviews (Highly desirable)

The [group] Information Specialist will search [databases] to retrieve published systematic reviews related to this review title, so that we can scan their reference lists to identify additional relevant trials.

C30 Searching reference lists (Mandatory)

We will check the bibliographies of included studies and any relevant systematic reviews identified for further references to relevant trials.

C31 Searching by contacting relevant individuals or organisations (Highly desirable)

We will contact experts/organisations in the field to obtain additional information on relevant trials.

C49 Obtaining unpublished data (Highly desirable)

We may contact original authors for clarification and further data if trial reports are unclear.

C3 Considering potential adverse effects (Mandatory)

We will not perform a separate search for adverse effects of interventions used for the treatment of XX. We will consider adverse effects described in included studies only.

OR

We will search [database name/s] for adverse effects information relevant to this review.