

How to report the search process in EPOC protocols, reviews and review updates

Contents:

- EPOC search methods template text
- PRISMA examples
- Appendix examples
- Examples of how to cite selected databases and resources

We have developed standardized language and format for reporting the search methods. While unique to EPOC, the wording and format agree with the major components of the [Cochrane Handbook](#) of Systematic Reviews, the [Cochrane Style Guide](#), and [MECIR](#) (Methodological Expectations for Cochrane Intervention Reviews) [Standards for the Reporting of Cochrane Intervention Reviews](#).

Questions regarding reporting of search methods should be directed to the Cochrane Information Specialist (CIS) assigned to your protocol, review, or update.

1. Protocols, reviews, and updates of reviews

- 1.1. Please document the strategies/search terms used, if possible, by saving a copy of the search strategies "as run", e.g showing number of results identified by each line of the strategy. This applies to all recourses searched.
- 1.2. Please use a search log to record database names, time span, provider, number of results identified and date when the strategies were run. Examples of search log templates are available in the [EPOC resources for review authors](#).
- 1.3. Please report whether or not the search strategies have been peer reviewed.

2. Protocols

- 2.1. Only one search strategy is required for publication of a protocol. Typically, this is the MEDLINE or PubMed strategy. However, if the other strategies have been developed, these may also be reported.
- 2.2. Please paste the protocol search strategy in an appendix, not in the main text.

3. Reviews

- 3.1. To report the search process, please use the following EPOC search methods template as appropriate.
- 3.2. All search strategies, including grey literature, trial registries and citation searches, should be included in an appendix. If possible they should be reported "as run" in other words with line numbers and line counts included.
- 3.3. Resources for grey literature and trial registries should be listed by full name, and the URL should be provided.

- 3.4. For hand searched journals, please document the title of the journal and the issues searched. Also indicate your method of "hand searching" e.g. if you searched the journals electronically, please report the terms used in an appendix.
- 3.5. If search strategies have been run more than once between the protocol stage and the review stage, please report the most recent rerun (without any time limits between the first run and the last rerun).
- 3.6. If search strategies have changed since publication of the protocol an explanation should be provided in the review section "What's New" or "History". Check with your Cochrane Information Specialist for guidance on where to report this information.
- 3.7. Please add number of items found and screened to [PRISMA](#) or other flow diagram, and report this information in an appendix.

EPOC SEARCH METHODS TEMPLATE

PROTOCOLS

Main text

Search methods for identification of studies – See Search methods for identification of studies under Reviews Main text below, and adjust as appropriate

Note:

Use the form: We will search

Report databases either with database time span OR with date searched

REVIEWS

Abstract

Search methods

We searched CENTRAL, MEDLINE, Embase, five other databases and two trials registers on DD Month YYYY together with reference checking, citation searching and contact with study authors to identify additional studies.

Note: If searches conducted on different dates add a date after each database name or provide a range of search dates, e.g. We searched between 25 July and 2 August 2016 (be careful to use dates in line with the Cochrane Style Manual)

Main text

Search methods for identification of studies

We searched the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR) and the Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects (DARE) for primary studies included in related systematic reviews.

We searched the following databases on DD Month YYYY:

- DATABASE NAME, DATABASE PROVIDER, (TIME SPAN)
- DATABASE NAME, DATABASE PROVIDER, (TIME SPAN)

Note: If searches conducted on different dates add (searched DD Month YYYY) after each database name.

The EPOC Cochrane Information Specialist (CIS) in consultation with the authors, developed the search strategies.

Search strategies are comprised of keywords and controlled vocabulary terms. We applied no language or time limits. We searched all databases from database start date to date of search.

Searching other resources

Grey Literature

We conducted a grey literature search to identify studies not indexed in the databases listed above.

- NAME [www](#)... (searched DD Month YYYY)

Trial Registries

- International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP), World Health Organization (WHO) www.who.int/ictcp/en/ (searched DD Month YYYY)
- ClinicalTrials.gov, US National Institutes of Health (NIH) clinicaltrials.gov/ (searched DD Month YYYY)

We also

- Screened individual journals and conference proceedings (e.g. hand search).
- Reviewed reference lists of all included studies, relevant systematic reviews/primary studies.
- Contacted authors of relevant studies/reviews to clarify reported published information and to seek unpublished results/data.
- Contacted researchers with expertise relevant to the review topic/ EPOC interventions.
- Conducted a cited reference search for all included studies in Web of Science.

All strategies used, including a list of sources screened and relevant reviews/primary studies reviewed, are provided in Appendix X.

RESULTS

Results of the search

We screened X references retrieved from databases and other sources searched. We included X and exclude X studies.

REVIEW UPDATE

Abstract

Search methods – see REVIEW above

Note: please report all databases searched for the current version of the review – previous search methodology is available in the previous version(s) of the review

Main text

Search methods for identification of studies – see REVIEW above

Note: please report all databases searched for the current version of the review – previous search methodology is available in the previous version(s) of the review

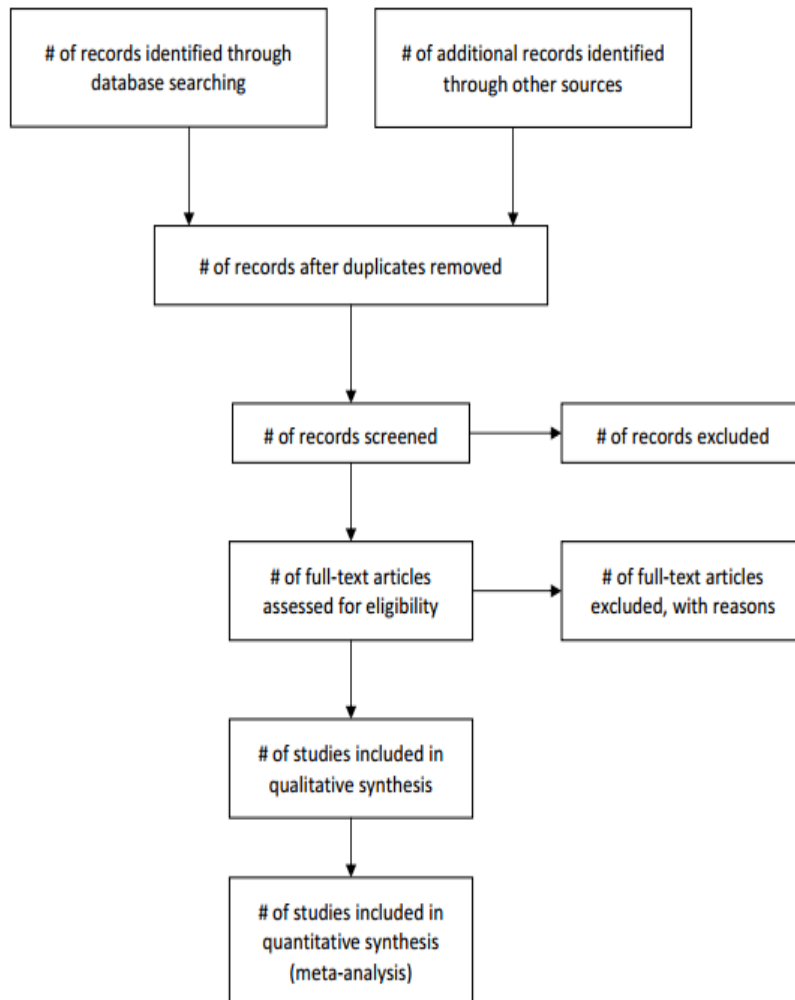
RESULTS

Results of the search – see REVIEW above

Note: please report the total number from the current and previous versions of the review

PRISMA FLOW DIAGRAM FOR REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

Note: For review updates please add the number of records from each previous version and the current version to each of the boxes in the flow diagram



For example, this is how the Cochrane review: Strategies for expanding health insurance coverage in vulnerable populations have reported the flow of studies, one diagram for the previous version and one for the updated one.

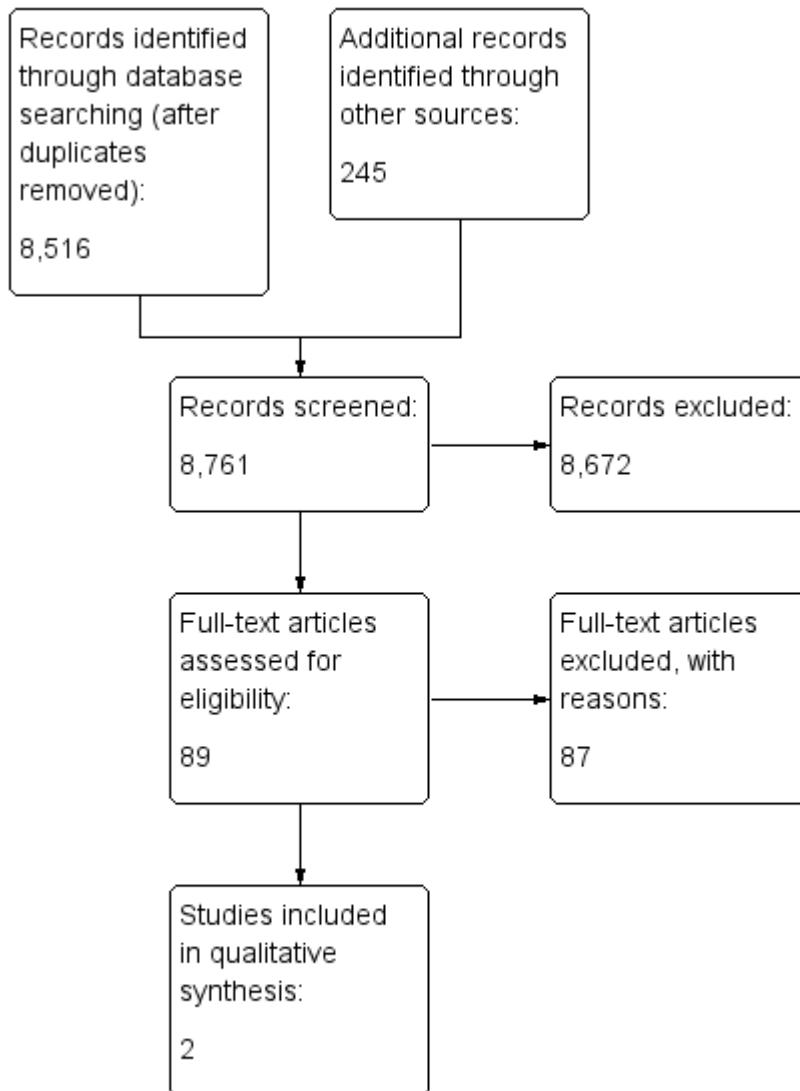


Figure 2. Study flow diagram for the previous version of the review (Meng 2010b).

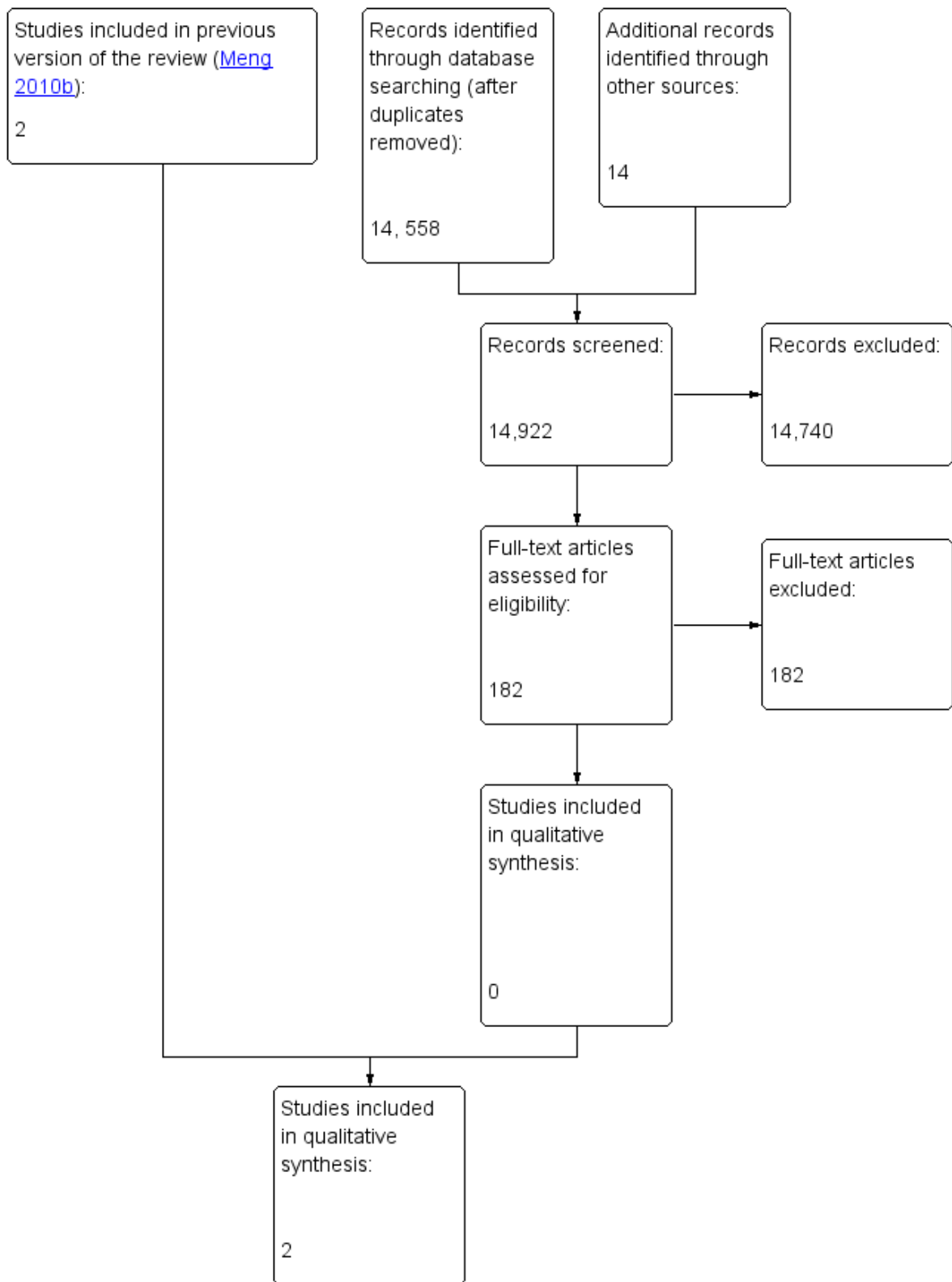


Figure 1. Study flow diagram.

SEARCH STRATEGY APPENDIX FOR PROTOCOLS

Search strategy

DATABASE NAME, DATABASE PROVIDER

(for OVID databases – note segment used, e.g. Ovid MEDLINE(R) Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations, Ovid MEDLINE(R) Daily, Ovid MEDLINE and Versions(R))

No.	Search terms	Results

SEARCH STRATEGY APPENDIX FOR REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

Search strategies

DATABASE NAME, DATABASE PROVIDER (searched DD Month YYYY)

(for OVID databases – note segment used, e.g. Ovid MEDLINE(R) Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations, Ovid MEDLINE(R) Daily, Ovid MEDLINE and Versions(R))

No.	Search terms	Results

DATABASE NAME, DATABASE PROVIDER (searched DD Month YYYY)

No.	Search terms	Results

DATABASE NAME, DATABASE PROVIDER (searched DD Month YYYY)

No.	Search terms	Results

DATABASE NAME, DATABASE PROVIDER (searched DD Month YYYY)

No.	Search terms	Results

EXAMPLES OF HOW TO CITE SELECTED DATABASES AND RESOURCES

If all searches conducted on same day and the text states: “We searched the following databases on DD Month YYYY” there is no need to repeat this date for all resources, e.g. Embase would become Embase Ovid (1974 onwards)

Databases	
CDSR	Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR; YYYY, Issue x) in the Cochrane Library
DARE	Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects (DARE; YYYY, Issue x) in the Cochrane Library
HTA	Health Technology Assessment Database (HTA; YYYY, Issue x) in the Cochrane Library
NHSEED	NHS Economic Evaluation Database (NHSEED; YYYY, Issue x) in the Cochrane Library
CENTRAL	Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL; YYYY, Issue x) in the Cochrane Library
MEDLINE (OVID)	MEDLINE Ovid (including Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations and Versions) (1946 to DD Month YYYY)
Embase (OVID)	Embase Ovid (1974 to 20xx Week x) OR Embase Ovid (1974 to DD Month YYYY)
CINAHL	CINAHL EBSCO (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature; 1980 to DD Month YYYY)
EconLit	EconLit, ProQuest (1969 to DD Month YYYY)
ERIC	ERIC ProQuest (1966 to DD Month YYYY)
Global Health	Global Health, CAB Direct Global Health Ovid (1973 to 2015 Week 48)
PsycINFO	PsycINFO Ovid (1987 to Month Week x YYYY) OR (1987 to DD Month YYYY)
LILACS	LILACS, Virtual Health Library (VHL) (Latin American and Caribbean Health Science Information database; 1982 to DD Month YYYY)
PAIS	PAIS International Political Science Abstracts ProQuest (1914 to DD Month YYYY)
Sociological Abstract	Sociological Abstract ProQuest (1952 to DD Month YYYY)
Social Services Abstracts	Social Services Abstracts ProQuest (1979 to DD Month YYYY)
Worldwide Political Science Abstracts	Worldwide Political Science Abstracts ProQuest (1975 to DD Month YYYY)
POPLINE	POPLINE, K4Health
Citation search	
Web of Science Core Collection	Science Citation Index 1975 to present, Social Sciences Citation Index 1975 to present, Emerging Sources Citation Index 2015 to DD Month YYYY, Web of Science
Registries	
ClinicalTrials	ClinicalTrials.gov, US National Institutes of Health (NIH) clinicaltrials.gov/ (searched DD Month YYYY)

ICTRP	International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP), World Health Organization (WHO) www.who.int/ictrp/en/ (searched DD Month YYYY)
Grey Literature	
OpenGrey	OpenGrey: www.opengrey.eu/
Grey Literature Report	Grey Literature Report (New York Academy of Medicine): www.greylit.org/
AHRQ	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ): www.ahrq.gov/
Joanna Briggs	Joanna Briggs Institute: www.joannabriggs.edu.au/Search.aspx
NICE	National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE): www.nice.org.uk/
Eldis	Eldis: www.eldis.org/

Suggested citation: Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC). [Resource title]. EPOC Resources for review authors, 2017. epoc.cochrane.org/resources/epoc-resources-review-authors (accessed DD Month YYYY)