Cochrane
Effective Practice and
Organisation of Care

How to use PDQ-Evidence to identify reviews and primary studies

PDQ-Evidence (pdq-evidence.org) is a database that focuses on evidence on health systems questions. It includes systematic reviews, broad syntheses (including evidence-based policy briefs, overviews of reviews, evidence-based guidance, and other evidence-based documents synthesising systematic reviews), primary studies included in systematic reviews, and structured summaries of that evidence. It was developed and is maintained by systematically searching PubMed and other databases for relevant systematic reviews and overviews of reviews. Only primary studies that have been included in a systematic review are included in PDQ-Evidence.

PDQ-Evidence relies on the screening effort of the Epistemonikos Project, which regularly screens multiple information sources, including the major health electronic databases to identify systematic reviews useful for decision-making in health. The average time between a systematic review being included in Epistemonikos and being evaluated for PDQ-Evidence is 1.5 days.
See details about Epistemonikos methods, including how up-to-date is in relation to the contributing databases, i.e. if a review is published in PubMed, how long will it take before it is also in PDQ?

Systematic review authors might find helpful to search PDQ-Evidence when starting a review or update. Some examples of how they can use the output that this search will provide are:

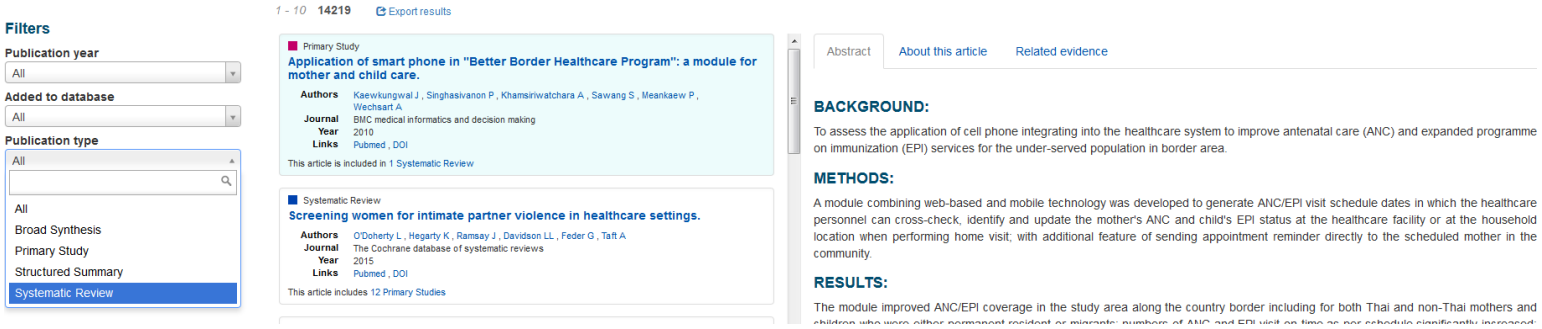
- Before submitting the Review Proposal Form to EPOC, in order to prevent duplication of topics within the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, and to identify existing evidence-base in a topic area so that the proposed review topic builds on, but does not replicate published research.
- When preparing the protocol, to include relevant reviews as background information (e.g. 'Why it is important to do this review')
- When conducting the review, to assess studies included in similar reviews that might be eligible to the EPOC review.
- When reporting the review, to compare the EPOC review with previous reviews (e.g. 'Discussion'). The matrix of evidence (see below) can be particularly useful to understand the differences in the evidence-base of each review.
- When evaluating the need for an update, to check if new reviews have included studies that might be eligible for the EPOC review.

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

How to search PDQ for new reviews

1. Create an account within PDQ – you need to be logged in order to save your searches and create a matrix.
2. PDQ-Evidence can easily be searched by typing terms into the search box and clicking on the "Search PDQ-Evidence" button. If more than one word is included in the search query, the results will only show articles that include all of the words that are used in either the title or the abstract. The advanced search includes more options, including search by specific field, Boolean operators, exact phrase search, truncation, parentheses, etc.

3. The list of results will include primary studies, systematic reviews, and overviews of reviews; the left-hand pane can be used to select a specific category, as well as to narrow down the publication date. On the right-hand screen you can see specific details, such as the abstract.



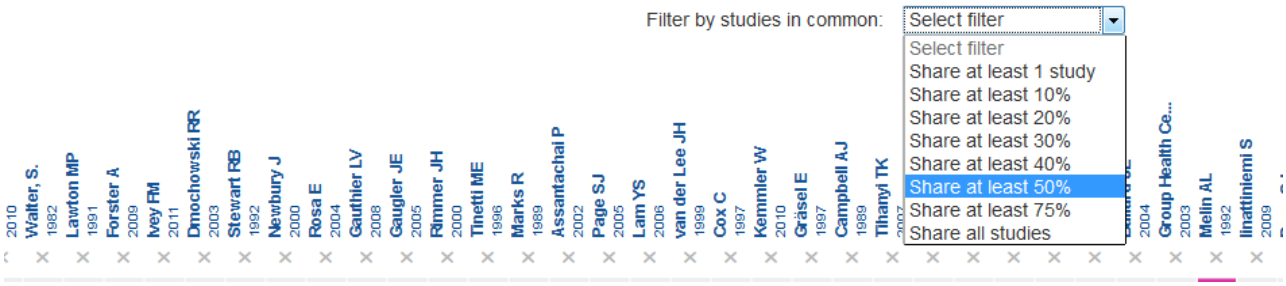
4. Select within the available reviews which one is more relevant.

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

How to create a matrix of evidence from an index review

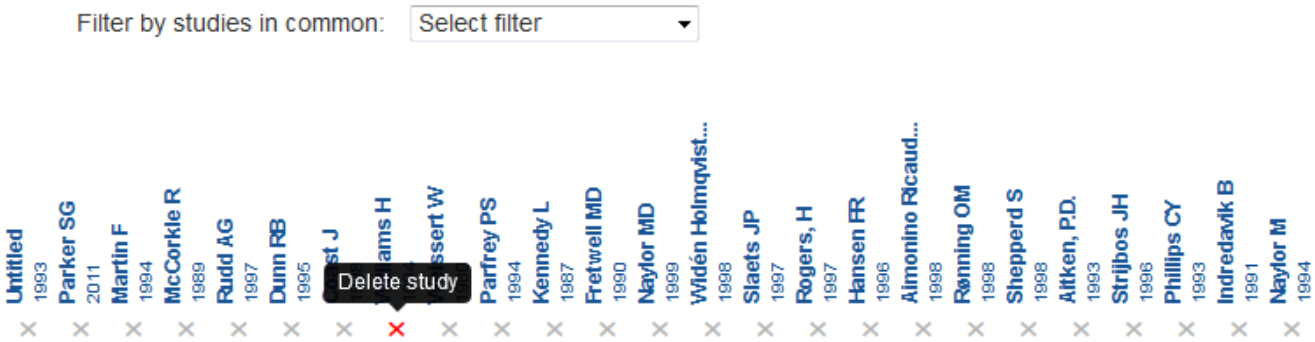
1. Once a relevant review has been identified, a matrix of evidence can be automatically created (click the link `Matrix' in the right-hand box – only visible when logged in). The matrix will include not only the index review and all of its primary studies, but also the systematic reviews where the primary studies have been included, along with all the primary studies included by those reviews.

2. Some of the references included in the matrix will not be relevant to the review question. The results can be narrowed down automatically, by selecting only reviews that share at least a certain proportion or overlapping primary studies.



3. Irrelevant reviews and primary studies can also be manually removed, resulting in a smaller matrix that will only contain relevant reviews and primary studies. To do this, just click in the 'X' in front of the article.

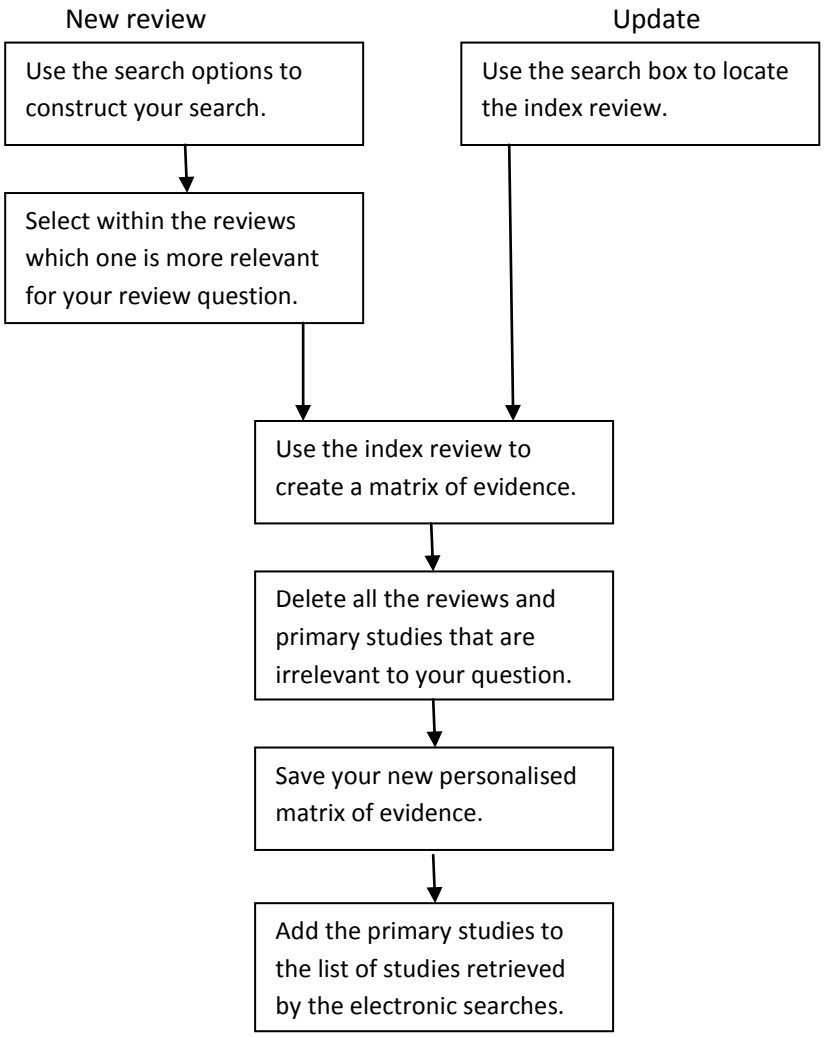
Suggested citation: Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC). [Title]. EPOC Resources for review authors, 2017. epoc.cochrane.org/resources/epoc-resources-review-authors (accessed DD Month YYYY)



4. Once all the irrelevant studies have been excluded, the matrix can be saved into your account.
5. The records of systematic reviews or primary studies can be downloaded into a reference manager and included in the batch of references identified by the search, by clicking in the export button.

Contact your search trials coordinator about reporting the search in PDQ-Evidence in the protocol or review, or to incorporate the studies downloaded from the matrix to the rest of your search results.

More details about aspects not directly relevant for conducting EPOC reviews can be seen here.


New review
Update
Use the search options to construct your search.
Use the search box to locate the index review.
Select within the reviews which one is more relevant for your review question.
Use the index review to create a matrix of evidence.
Delete all the reviews and primary studies that are irrelevant to your question.
Save your new personalised matrix of evidence.
Add the primary studies to the list of studies retrieved by the electronic searches.