

Search methods and strategy peer review assessment form for Cochrane intervention protocols¹

For use by a Cochrane Information Specialist, or an expert searcher external to Cochrane, to peer review a draft protocol's search methods, including the primary database strategy.

Review title	<i>A sample protocol of intervention for arthritis</i>
Authors	<i>Doe J, et al</i>
CRG	[enter if known, may be left blank if N/A]
Archie version no.	[enter if known, may be left blank if N/A]

Reviewer: [enter name]	Email: [enter email]	Date of Completion: [enter date]
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Part A of this form (items 1-5) is structured around the search-related mandatory requirements for Cochrane intervention protocols as detailed in the MECIR standards for reporting protocols. The complete MECIR manual can be found here: <https://community.cochrane.org/mecir-manual>

Part B of this form (items 6-12) presents the [PRESS](#) elements (adapted by the Cochrane Information Specialist Support Team) for assessing the main database search strategy provided in the protocol. Where appropriate, each item also details the relevant MECIR conduct standard.

PART A: MECIR ELEMENTS

1. Search sources

PR17 List all sources that will be searched, including: CRG specialized register(s), CENTRAL, other databases, trials registers, websites and grey literature.

See also [related conduct standards C24, C26 and C27](#) for sources that are mandatory to search and therefore should be listed in the protocol

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If "B" or "C," please provide an explanation or example:

REQUIRED REVISION: The search methods section (pg 3) reports that MEDLINE, CENTRAL and ClinicalTrials.gov will be searched. Please revise the list of planned sources and include Embase (MECIR C24) and WHO ICTRP (MECIR C27).

SUGGESTED REVISION: Consider checking for trial data on the AbbVie website. It appears there are some trials listed on Humira that may meet your eligibility - <https://www.humiraconnect.com/rheumatoid-arthritis/efficacy#clinical-trials>

2. Reference checking

PR17 ...State whether reference lists will be searched and whether individuals or organizations will be contacted.

¹ Designed specifically for use with protocols of intervention reviews of RCTs. Please use with caution when reviewing protocols for other review types.

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

REQUIRED REVISION: The search methods section (pg 3) does not mention if reference lists will be searched. Please revise the search methods to include checking reference lists (MECIR C30).

3. Search restrictions

PR18 Specify and justify any restrictions to be placed on the search (e.g. time period or publication format).

See also [related conduct standards C19 and C35](#) for more information on restrictions

A. No revisions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

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4. Searches for different types of evidence

PR19 Some reviews (e.g. qualitative, adverse effects, ...) extend beyond a focus on the effects of healthcare interventions and address specific additional types of evidence.

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

REQUIRED REVISION: The eligibility criteria includes studies about adverse effects. The current search may be overly specific as it is limited to RCTs. Please ensure that the search approach will capture studies that will report on adverse effects (MECIR PR19).

5. Search strategy (or strategies)

PR20 Present the complete search strategy (or strategies) to be implemented for at least one database in an Appendix, including any limits and filters to be used.

A. No revisions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

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PART B: PRESS ELEMENTS

6. TRANSLATION/STRUCTURE OF SEARCH

C32 Inform the structure of search strategies in bibliographic databases around the main concepts of the review, using appropriate elements from PICO and study design. In structuring the search, maximize sensitivity whilst striving for reasonable precision.

See full MECIR item [here](#)

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

SUGGESTED REVISION: As above, suggest increasing the sensitivity of the search by including an adverse events (AE filter). The current search structure is: Set 1 (arthritis) AND Set 2 (anti-rheumatics) AND RCT filter
Suggest revising as: Set 1 (arthritis) AND Set 2 (anti-rheumatics) AND (RCT filter OR AE filter)

7. BOOLEAN AND PROXIMITY OPERATORS

C32 ...ensure correct use of the AND and OR operators. See full MECIR item [here](#)

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

REQUIRED REVISION: There is a Boolean logic error in line 5 of the MEDLINE strategy. This should be or/1-4, not or/1-3. Please revise to ensure line 4 is included in the final results.

9. SUBJECT HEADINGS

C33 Identify appropriate controlled vocabulary (e.g. MeSH, Emtree, including 'exploded' terms). See full MECIR item [here](#)

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

SUGGESTED REVISION: Suggest including the MeSH term [Arthritis, Juvenile/](#)

10. TEXT WORD SEARCHING

C33 ... and free-text terms (considering, for example, spelling variants, synonyms, acronyms, truncation and proximity operators). See full MECIR item [here](#)

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

*SUGGESTED REVISION: Suggest including synonym terms -
 juvenile idiopathic arthritis
 juvenile psoriatic arthritis*

11. SPELLING, SYNTAX, AND LINE NUMBERS

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

SUGGESTED REVISION: Suggest including truncation in line 6 for anti-rheumatic to capture instances of anti-rheumatics*

12. LIMITS AND FILTERS

C19 ... ensuring that relevant time periods ... and not restricted by language or publication status.

C34 Use specially designed and tested search filters where appropriate including the Cochrane Highly Sensitive Search Strategies for identifying randomized trials in MEDLINE, but do not use filters in pre-filtered databases e.g. do not use a randomized trial filter in CENTRAL or a systematic review filter in DARE. See full MECIR items [here](#)

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input type="checkbox"/>

If “B” or “C,” please provide an explanation or example:

SUGGESTED REVISION: The RCT filter appears overly specific. Please consider replacing with a Cochrane Highly Sensitive Search Strategy for MEDLINE (MECIR C34 – highly desirable).

OVERALL EVALUATION FOR THE SEARCH METHODS SECTION and the PRIMARY DATABASE SEARCH STRATEGY (Note: If one or more “revision required” is noted above, the response below must be “revisions required”).

A. No revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Revision(s) suggested	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Revision(s) required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Additional comments:

Comments in section B above are specific to the MEDLINE strategy presented in the appendix.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

Do you have any potential conflict of interest? ☐ Yes (details below) ☒ No

You should declare and describe any present or past affiliations or other involvement in any organisation or entity with an interest in the outcome of the review that might lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest. This includes acting as an investigator of a study that might be included in this review. You should declare potential conflicts even if you are confident that your judgement is not influenced.

Conflict of interest statement:

I have no conflicts of interest to declare

Peer referee anonymity and acknowledgement

	Yes	No
I am willing to be identified as the author of this referee feedback	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy to be acknowledged in the published review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy to be acknowledged on the Group’s website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>