Road Map for Systematic Reviews

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The “road map” to systematic reviews

Articles considered eligible after full-text review (by two reviewers) is the final set of studies for inclusion ($n_0$)

Excluded from the final analysis ($n_e$)

Studies included in the final analysis ($n_i$)

Each article gets a unique ID number

Reviewer 1 extracts data (including quality assessment) from the final selected articles

Reviewer 2 extracts data (including quality assessment) from the final selected articles

Reviewers meet and resolve disagreements on data

Compute inter-rater reliability (e.g. Kappa statistic)

The final data after this process is ready for data entry

Enter data into database manager software

Import data and analyse using software

Tabulate study characteristics

Generate forest plots of effect measures

Check for heterogeneity

Pool effect measures if heterogeneity is not a concern

If heterogeneity is found, identify sources of heterogeneity

Consider subgroup and sensitivity analyses

Explore possibility of publication bias

Interpret, discuss results and write the report:

Discuss applicability of results and limitations of the review

Avoid making policy recommendations; suggest areas for future research, if the review question is not fully answered

You published your review! Celebrate!!!