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Is it possible to focus Emtree without loss of sensitivity when searching Embase for systematic reviews? Evidence from practice

Steven Duffy, Janine Ross, Kate Misso, Caro Noake,
Lisa Stirk

steven@systematic-reviews.com

Kleijnen Systematic Reviews (KSR) Ltd.

Conflict of Interest



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I have no actual or potential conflict of interest
in relation to this presentation

Objective



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Indexing terms from the Embase EMTREE thesaurus can be restricted to retrieve results where the EMTREE term is the main focus of the article

depression/ (272,703)

*depression/ (122,986)

To investigate whether restricting EMTREE terms to focus (**RtF**) reduces the total number of Embase records retrieved without missing relevant studies

Methods



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Retrospectively tested the Embase strategies of seven recent KSR reviews to compare:

- Total number of records retrieved
 - Number of included studies identified
-

Results



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- In all reviews the total number of records retrieved with RtF EMTREE searches was reduced
- One review saw a reduction of 68% in the number of records retrieved, whilst the smallest reduction was 17%
- Two review searches missed included studies: a loss of sensitivity from 75% to 50% in one review; and from 68% to 60% in the second

Detailed Results Tables are available at: www.systematic-reviews.com/news/

Conclusions



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Our investigations were unable to conclusively support our hypothesis.

Caution when considering RtF:

- confident of the sensitivity of the search strategy;
- exhausted all means of reducing an extremely large number of records retrieved (unmanageable in the context of time and resources available);
- compensate for using RtF with more sensitive searching elsewhere (in the search strategy and other databases)

Further investigations ongoing: larger sample using Cochrane reviews/NIHR Health Technology Assessment reports

References available at: www.systematic-reviews.com/news/