

1. Was an 'a priori' design provided?

Criteria
➤ 'A priori' design
➤ Statement of inclusion criteria
➤ PICO/PIPO research question (population, intervention, comparison, prediction, outcome)

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → 4

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → 3

If it satisfies 1 of the criteria → 2

If it satisfies 0 of the criteria → 1

2. Was there duplicate study selection and data extraction?

Criteria
➤ There should be at least two independent data extractors as stated or implied.
➤ Statement of recognition or awareness of consensus procedure for disagreements.
➤ Disagreements among extractors resolved properly as stated or implied.

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → 4

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → 3

If it satisfies 1 of the criteria → 2

If it satisfies 0 of the criteria → 1

3. Was a comprehensive literature search performed?

Criteria
➤ At least two electronic sources should be searched.
➤ The report must include years and databases used (e.g. Central, EMBASE, and MEDLINE).
➤ Key words and/or MESH terms must be stated and where feasible the search strategy outline should be provided such that one can trace the filtering process of the included articles.
➤ In addition to the electronic databases (PubMed, EMBASE, Medline), all searches should be supplemented by consulting current contents, reviews, textbooks, specialized registers, or experts in the particular field of study, and by reviewing the references in the studies found.
➤ Journals were “hand-searched” or “manual searched” (i.e. identifying highly relevant journals and conducting a manual, page-by-page search of their entire contents looking for potentially eligible studies).

If it satisfies 4 or 5 of the criteria → **4**

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → **3**

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → **2**

If it satisfies 1 or 0 of the criteria → **1**

4. Was the status of publication (i.e. grey literature) used as an inclusion criterion?

Criteria
➤ The authors should state that they searched for reports regardless of their publication type.
➤ The authors should state whether or not they excluded any reports (from the systematic review), based on their publication status, language etc.
➤ “Non-English papers were translated” or readers sufficiently trained in foreign language
➤ No language restriction or recognition of non-English articles

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → **4**

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → **3**

If it satisfies 1 of the criteria → **2**

If it satisfies 0 of the criteria → **1**

5. Was a list of studies (included and excluded) provided?

Criteria
➤ Table/list/or figure of included studies, a reference list does not suffice.
➤ Table/list/figure of excluded studies either in the article or in a supplemental source (i.e. online). (Excluded studies refers to those studies seriously considered on the basis of title and/or abstract, but rejected after reading the body of the text)
➤ Author satisfactorily/sufficiently stated the reason for exclusion of the seriously considered studies.
➤ Reader is able to retrace the included and the excluded studies anywhere in the article bibliography, reference, or supplemental source

If it satisfies 4 of the criteria → **4**

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → **3**

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → **2**

If it satisfies 1 or 0 of the criteria → **1**

6. Were the characteristics of the included studies provided?

Criteria
➤ In an aggregated form such as a table, data from the original studies should be provided on the participants, interventions and outcomes.
➤ Provide the ranges of relevant characteristics in the studies analyzed (e.g. age, race, sex, relevant socioeconomic data, disease status, duration, severity, or other diseases should be reported.)
➤ The information provided appears to be complete and accurate (i.e. there is a tolerable range of subjectivity here. Is the reader left wondering? If so, state the needed information and the reasoning).

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → **4**

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → **3**

If it satisfies 1 of the criteria → **2**

If it satisfies 0 criteria → **1**

7. Was the scientific quality of the included studies assessed and documented?

Criteria
➤ 'A priori' methods of assessment should be provided (e.g., for effectiveness studies if the author(s) chose to include only randomized, double-blind, placebo controlled studies, or allocation concealment as inclusion criteria); for other types of studies alternative items will be relevant.
➤ The scientific quality of the included studies appears to be meaningful.
➤ Discussion/recognition/awareness of level of evidence
➤ Quality of evidence should be rated/ranked based on characterized instruments. (Characterized instrument is a created instrument that ranks the level of evidence, e.g. GRADE [Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation].)

If it satisfies 4 of the criteria → 4

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → 3

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → 2

If it satisfies 1 or 0 of the criteria → 1

8. Was the scientific quality of the included studies used appropriately in formulating conclusions?

Criteria
➤ The results of the methodological rigor and scientific quality should be considered in the analysis and the conclusions of the review
➤ The results of the methodological rigor and scientific quality are explicitly stated in formulating recommendations.
➤ To have conclusions integrated/drives towards a clinical consensus statement
➤ This clinical consensus statement drives toward revision or confirmation of clinical practice guidelines

If it satisfies 4 of the criteria →4

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria →3

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria →2

If it satisfies 1 or 0 of the criteria → 1

9. Were the methods used to combine the findings of studies appropriate?

Criteria

- Statement of criteria that were used to decide that the studies analyzed were similar enough to be pooled?
- For the pooled results, a test should be done to ensure the studies were combinable, to assess their homogeneity (i.e. Chi-squared test for homogeneity, I^2).
- Is there a recognition of heterogeneity or lack of thereof
- If heterogeneity exists a “random effects model” should be used and/or the rationale (i.e. clinical appropriateness) of combining should be taken into consideration (i.e. is it sensible to combine?), or stated explicitly
- If homogeneity exists, author should state a rationale or a statistical test

If it satisfy 4 of the criteria → **4**

If it satisfy 3 of the criteria → **3**

If it satisfy 2 of the criteria → **2**

If it satisfy 1 or 0 of the following criteria → **1**

10. Was the likelihood of publication bias (a.k.a. “file drawer” effect) assessed?

Criteria

- Recognition of publication bias or file-drawer effect
- An assessment of publication bias should include graphical aids (e.g., funnel plot, other available tests)
- Statistical tests (e.g., Egger regression test).

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → **4**

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → **3**

If it satisfies 1 of the criteria → **2**

If it satisfies 0 of the criteria → **1**

11. Was the conflict of interest stated?

Criteria
➤ Statement of sources of support
➤ No conflict of interest. This is subjective and may require some deduction or searching.
➤ An awareness/statement of support or conflict of interest in the primary inclusion studies

If it satisfies 3 of the criteria → **4**

If it satisfies 2 of the criteria → **3**

If it satisfies 1 of the criteria → **2**

If it satisfies 0 of the criteria → **1**