

Guidelines for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses are systematic, critical assessments of literature and data sources pertaining to clinical topics that emphasize factors such as cause, diagnosis, prognosis, therapy, or prevention. Meta-analyses that address questions for which there is clinical equipoise are preferred.

All articles or data sources should be searched for and selected systematically for inclusion and critically evaluated, and the search and selection process should be described in the manuscript. The specific type of study or analysis, population, intervention, exposure, and tests or outcomes should be described for each article or data source (PICOS format). The data sources should be as current as possible, ideally with the search having been conducted within several months of manuscript submission.

For meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials, follow [PRISMA reporting guidelines and checklist](#). For meta-analyses of observational studies in epidemiology, follow [MOOSE reporting guidelines](#).

Meta-analyses and systematic reviews not following these guidelines will not be peer reviewed. Additional criteria appear below.

Title

Include either “meta-analysis” or “systematic review,” as appropriate, in a subtitle following the title.

Abstract

Word limit: 250 words

Structure with the following headings: **Background, Purpose, Data Sources, Study Selection, Data Extraction, Data Synthesis, Limitations, Conclusions.**

Manuscript

Word limit: 5,000 words (excluding abstract and references)

Please format with the following sections: **Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion.**

End the Introduction section with a clear statement of the study’s objectives or hypotheses.

The Methods section should include the following subheadings:

- Data Sources and Searches
- Study Selection
- Data Extraction and Quality Assessment
- Data Synthesis and Analysis

For studies that have numerical data and use statistical inference, include a section under Methods that describes the methods and specific statistical software used for the statistical analyses.

References: minimum 40, maximum 60 citations

Tables and figures: Any combination of 4 tables and/or figures will be accepted—Include a flow diagram that depicts search and selection processes, along with evidence tables.