#### Item 7: INFORMATION SOURCES.

Describe all information sources in the search (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) and date last searched.

**Example.** “Studies were identified by searching electronic databases, scanning reference lists of articles and consultation with experts in the field and drug companies…No limits were applied for language and foreign papers were translated. This search was applied to Medline (1966–Present), CancerLit (1975–Present), and adapted for Embase (1980–Present), Science Citation Index Expanded (1981–Present) and Pre-Medline electronic databases. Cochrane and DARE (Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness) databases were reviewed…The last search was run on 19 June 2001. In addition, we handsearched contents pages of Journal of Clinical Oncology 2001, European Journal of Cancer 2001 and Bone 2001, together with abstracts printed in these journals 1999–2001. A limited update literature search was performed from 19 June 2001 to 31 December 2003.”

#### Explanation.

The National Library of Medicine's MEDLINE database is one of the most comprehensive sources of health care information in the world. Like any database, however, its coverage is not complete and varies according to the field. Retrieval from any single database, even by an experienced searcher, may be imperfect, which is why detailed reporting is important within the systematic review.

At a minimum, for each database searched, authors should report the database, platform, or provider (e.g., Ovid, Dialog, PubMed) and the start and end dates for the search of each database. This information lets readers assess the currency of the review, which is important because the publication time-lag outdates the results of some reviews. This information should also make updating more efficient . Authors should also report who developed and conducted the search .

In addition to searching databases, authors should report the use of supplementary approaches to identify studies, such as hand searching of journals, checking reference lists, searching trials registries or regulatory agency Web sites, contacting manufacturers, or contacting authors. Authors should also report if they attempted to acquire any missing information (e.g., on study methods or results) from investigators or sponsors; it is useful to describe briefly who was contacted and what unpublished information was obtained.