#### Item 8: SEARCH.

Present the full electronic search strategy for at least one major database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.

**Examples.** In text: “We used the following search terms to search all trials registers and databases: immunoglobulin\*; IVIG; sepsis; septic shock; septicaemia; and septicemia…”

In appendix: “Search strategy: MEDLINE (OVID)

01. immunoglobulins/

02. immunoglobulin$.tw.

03. ivig.tw.

04. 1 or 2 or 3

05. sepsis/

06. sepsis.tw.

07. septic shock/

08. septic shock.tw.

09. septicemia/

10. septicaemia.tw.

11. septicemia.tw.

12. 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11

13. 4 and 12

14. randomized controlled trials/

15. randomized-controlled-trial.pt.

16. controlled-clinical-trial.pt.

17. random allocation/

18. double-blind method/

19. single-blind method/

20. 14 or 15 or 16 or 17 or 18 or 19

21. exp clinical trials/

22. clinical-trial.pt.

23. (clin$ adj trial$).ti,ab.

24. ((singl$ or doubl$ or trebl$ or tripl$) adj (blind$)).ti,ab.

25. placebos/

26. placebo$.ti,ab.

27. random$.ti,ab.

28. 21 or 22 or 23 or 24 or 25 or 26 or 27

29. research design/

30. comparative study/

31. exp evaluation studies/

32. follow-up studies/

33. prospective studies/

34. (control$ or prospective$ or volunteer$).ti,ab.

35. 30 or 31 or 32 or 33 or 34

36. 20 or 28 or 29 or 35

37. 13 and 36”

#### Explanation.

The search strategy is an essential part of the report of any systematic review. Searches may be complicated and iterative, particularly when reviewers search unfamiliar databases or their review is addressing a broad or new topic. Perusing the search strategy allows interested readers to assess the comprehensiveness and completeness of the search, and to replicate it. Thus, we advise authors to report their full electronic search strategy for at least one major database. As an alternative to presenting search strategies for all databases, authors could indicate how the search took into account other databases searched, as index terms vary across databases. If different searches are used for different parts of a wider question (e.g., questions relating to benefits and questions relating to harms), we recommend authors provide at least one example of a strategy for each part of the objective . We also encourage authors to state whether search strategies were peer reviewed as part of the systematic review process .

We realize that journal restrictions vary and that having the search strategy in the text of the report is not always feasible. We strongly encourage all journals, however, to find ways, such as a “Web extra,” appendix, or electronic link to an archive, to make search strategies accessible to readers. We also advise all authors to archive their searches so that (1) others may access and review them (e.g., replicate them or understand why their review of a similar topic did not identify the same reports), and (2) future updates of their review are facilitated.

Several sources provide guidance on developing search strategies. Most searches have constraints, for example relating to limited time or financial resources, inaccessible or inadequately indexed reports and databases, unavailability of experts with particular language or database searching skills, or review questions for which pertinent evidence is not easy to find. Authors should be straightforward in describing their search constraints. Apart from the keywords used to identify or exclude records, they should report any additional limitations relevant to the search, such as language and date restrictions (see also eligibility criteria, Item 6).