#### Item 9: STUDY SELECTION.

State the process for selecting studies (i.e., for screening, for determining eligibility, for inclusion in the systematic review, and, if applicable, for inclusion in the meta-analysis).

**Example.** “Eligibility assessment…[was] performed independently in an unblinded standardized manner by 2 reviewers…Disagreements between reviewers were resolved by consensus.”

#### Explanation.

There is no standard process for selecting studies to include in a systematic review. Authors usually start with a large number of identified records from their search and sequentially exclude records according to eligibility criteria. We advise authors to report how they screened the retrieved records (typically a title and abstract), how often it was necessary to review the full text publication, and if any types of record (e.g., letters to the editor) were excluded. We also advise using the PRISMA flow diagram to summarize study selection processes (see Item 17; [Box 3](http://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000100#pmed-1000100-box003)).

Efforts to enhance objectivity and avoid mistakes in study selection are important. Thus authors should report whether each stage was carried out by one or several people, who these people were, and, whenever multiple independent investigators performed the selection, what the process was for resolving disagreements. The use of at least two investigators may reduce the possibility of rejecting relevant reports. The benefit may be greatest for topics where selection or rejection of an article requires difficult judgments. For these topics, authors should ideally tell readers the level of inter-rater agreement, how commonly arbitration about selection was required, and what efforts were made to resolve disagreements (e.g., by contact with the authors of the original studies).