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Finding the Evidence: Searching Principles

Claire Twose, MLIS
Johns Hopkins University

Agenda and Outline

- Four sections:
 1. Introduction
 2. Identifying key sources and techniques for searching
 3. Building a high-quality search strategy
 4. Documenting your search and conclusions



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Section A

Introduction

Start With an Answerable Research Question

- Okay, I have an answerable research question
 - What next?
 - ▶ Develop your protocol
 - Most importantly for searching, develop inclusion and exclusion criteria
 - ▶ Work with an information specialist trained in searching for systematic reviews
 - ▶ Use Chapter 6 in the Cochrane Handbook as a guide
 - ▶ Include the search protocol in your overall protocol (strategy and sources)
 - ▶ Document everything you do and when you do it!

Caution!

- Don't underestimate the difficulty or resources required to identify published and unpublished data!



Obstacles to Obtaining Data for Systematic Review

- Complete data collection can be challenging if ...
 - Data were not published
 - Published data are not easily found

Searching: Important Questions

- Why not just do a PubMed search or look in bibliographies?
- What databases are available?
- Is it really necessary to find unpublished data or to look beyond articles published in English?
- Does doing a good search matter?
 - Hexamethonium
- How does one search?

Identification of Evidence

- Develop your protocol for conducting the search:
 - What sources?
 - ▶ Databases
 - ▶ Hand-searching
 - How searched?
 - ▶ Dates
 - ▶ Strategies
 - How to make decisions?
 - ▶ Duplicate screening?
 - How to document?
 - ▶ Dates and numbers included/excluded

Looking Ahead

- Next section:
 - Key sources and techniques for searching