Preparing for a Systematic Review Consultation

Is a systematic review required?

- Systematic review or literature review or some other review type?
  A systematic review is a protocol-driven, comprehensive literature review, usually designed to answer a specific clinical question. It involves a specific research methodology with well-defined, internationally accepted characteristics. If you are not prepared to follow this strict methodology then perhaps another review type would be more appropriate. [See Review Types tab]

- Has a systematic review already been done on your topic?
  Check both core and specialty databases to identify published systematic reviews on your topic. You should also check for registered systematic review protocols in Prospero and the Cochrane Library to ensure that you are not duplicating the work of others. If a systematic review already exists, you will want to assess the review's quality and consider whether an update or new review would be of value.

Are you familiar with existing standards/methodologies for the design, conduct and reporting of systematic reviews?

There are established standards and methods for conducting and reporting systematic reviews. We recommend that you select one from the list below to guide your work and written protocol.

- Institute of Medicine Standards for Systematic Reviews
- Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)
- CASP Systematic review critical appraisal checklist
- Cochrane Handbook
- JBI Reviewers’ Manual
- EPPI-Centre's An Introduction to Systematic Reviews

Do you have the time and resources needed to complete the systematic review?

- What is your timeframe? Is it realistic?
  A systematic review is a large complex undertaking that will require a substantial amount of time to complete. Eight months to one year is a realistic expectation.

- Do you have a team of at least three people?
  Systematic review protocols generally dictate that two or more individuals independently review each retrieved article to determine whether it meets inclusion criteria. A third team member resolves conflicts.

- Do you have time to screen the results of comprehensive literature searches?
  A systematic review literature search is designed to find all relevant materials in all languages across multiple databases and grey literature sources (clinical trial
repositories, web sites, and unpublished literature). These literature searches generate thousands of results.

- Do you have a plan for managing search results?
  CWML librarians are currently using EndNote as a reference management tool. We also support Covidence for screening.

**Have you considered where you would like to publish your systematic review?**
Not all journals publish systematic reviews and those that do may have submission criteria or author instructions that are specific to systematic reviews.

To help us understand the scope of your request, please contact us via the Literature Request Form [under Guide Contents].