“Available Upon Reasonable Request”: Search strategy sharing statements and practices in published systematic reviews

Spoiler: We need to do better!

What we did

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search</th>
<th>Screen</th>
<th>Data extraction</th>
<th>Requesting searches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Published between 2018-2022</td>
<td>Screened 816 records</td>
<td>Data extracted by single reviewer:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of search (EBSCO Medline): TX ((“search strategy” OR “search strategies”) N5 (“upon request” OR “on request” OR “by request” OR “first author*” OR “corresponding author*”)) AND TX (&quot;systematic review&quot; OR &quot;systematic literature review&quot;)</td>
<td>Eligibility criteria:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Systematic reviews, systematic literature reviews or meta-analysis</td>
<td>○ Discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ English language</td>
<td>○ Does the review cite PRISMA?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Included a search strategy availability statement</td>
<td>○ Does the journal endorse PRISMA?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ 155 reviews included</td>
<td>○ Is a search strategy included?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○ How many searches are included?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○ Where were the searches located?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What we saw

Even though PRISMA requires a strategy to be included, 71% of articles citing PRISMA did not provide any reproducible search strategies in the manuscript

- 155 included articles
- 43 reviews included one or more reproducible searches
- 112 reviews did not contain a single reproducible search
- 23 cite PRISMA
- 20 did not cite PRISMA
- 60 cite PRISMA
- 52 did not cite PRISMA

46% of articles that did NOT cite PRISMA were published in journals that endorse PRISMA

What we got

46% (n = 72) of the authors replied to our email

- Bounced - Email Undeliverable: 17 (11%)
- Auto-replies (no longer @ organization): 3 (2%)
- No response from author: 63 (41%)
- Received a response from author: 72 (46%)
  - 65 replied within 2 weeks
  - 56 sent search strategies

Only 36% (n = 56) of the authors sent us their searches

Only 1 in 3 requests for search strategies were filled.

Relying on personal communication to obtain search histories is unrealistic. Journal endorsement of PRISMA is meaningless if adherence to the requirements is not enforced.

Let us know at the following link: lib.uvic.ca/chla23

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What about you?