

ClinicalTrials.govembase

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The question – CTG records

Clinicaltrials.gov (CTG) must be searched for Systematic Reviews of intervention effectiveness. ICTRP is also one of the recommended trial registries. It contains CTG records.

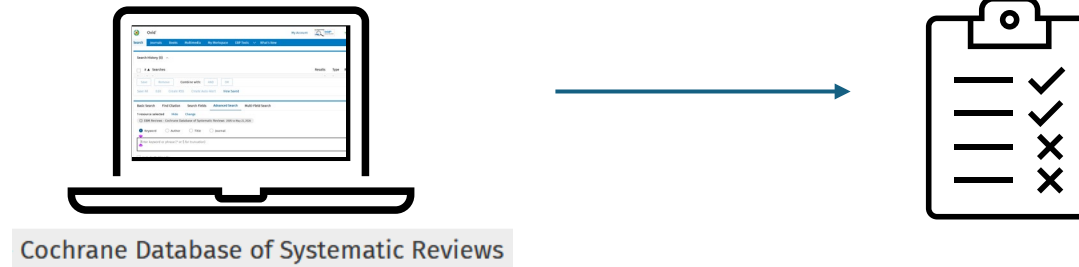
- Neither are “fun” to search, and lack advanced search operators

Embase now indexes CTG records – and we already create search strategies for this source so - could we just use it for searching CTG records?

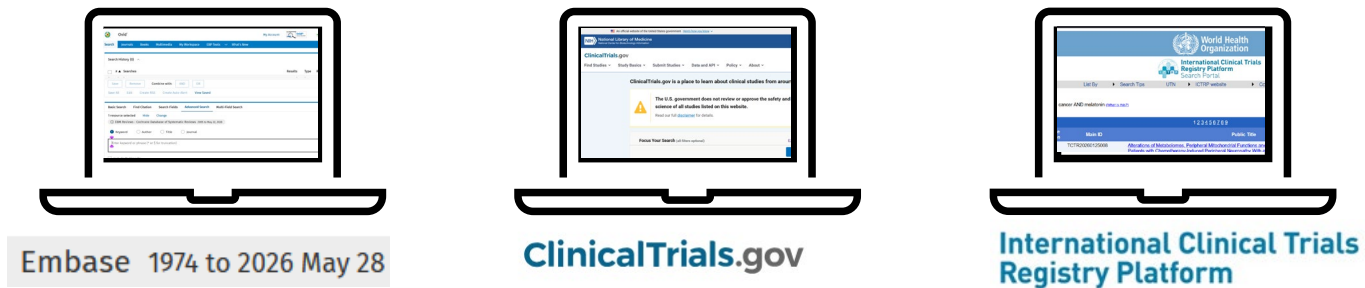


The method

Step 1 Gather sample



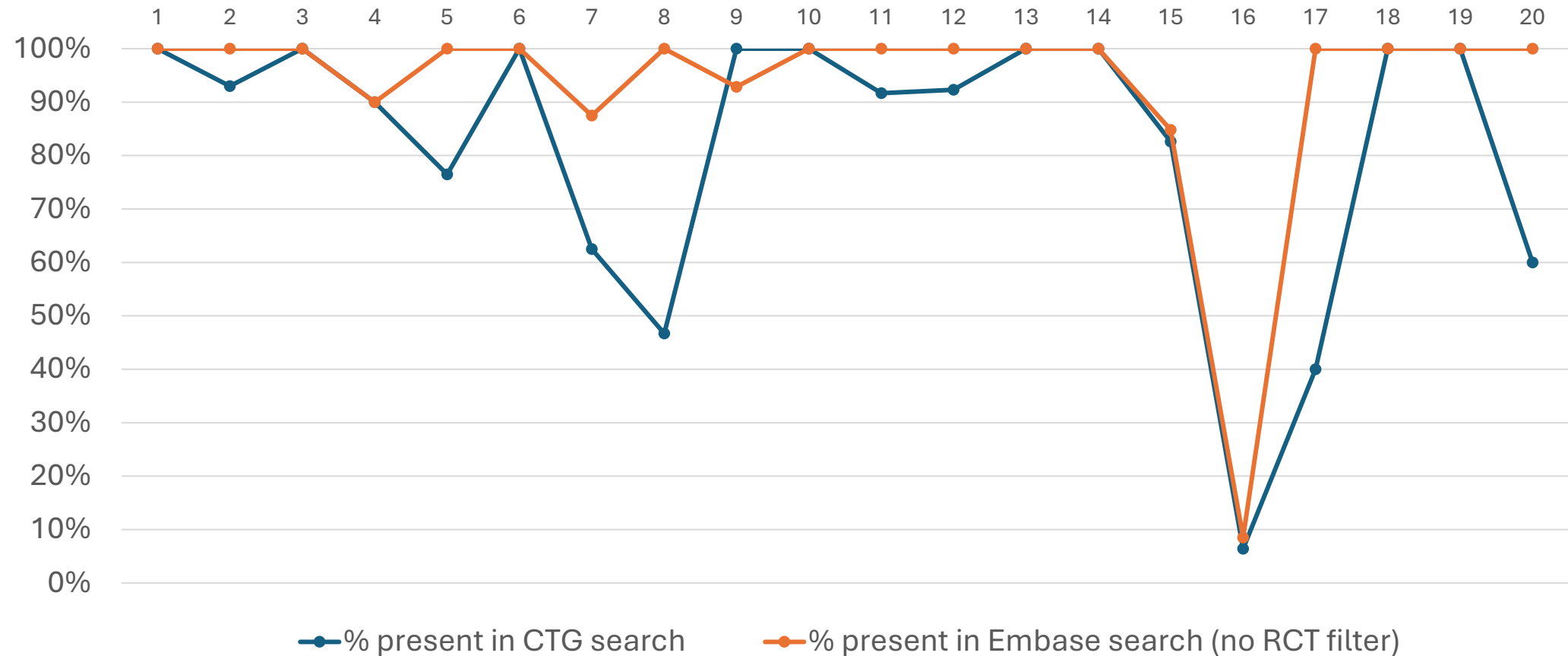
Step 2 Collect data



Step 3 Extract/analyze data



The results – 100% retrieval in 15 of 20 studies



The results – what happened in the other 5 studies

Included study #	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
# of included CTG references	30	17	22	8	15	14	26	12	13	5	34	46	47
Found in CTG search	27	13	22	5	7	14	26	11	12	5	34	39	3
% present in CTG search	90%	76%	100%	63%	47%	100%	100%	92%	92%	100%	100%	85%	6%
Found in Embase search (no RCT filter concept)	27	17	22	7	15	13	26	12	13	5	34	40	4
% present in Embase search (no RCT filter)	90%	100%	100%	88%	100%	93%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	87%	9%
Found by CTG & not found by Embase (no RCT)	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Found by Embase (no RCT) & NOT found by CTG	3	4	0	3	8	0	0	1	1	0	0	6	1

The CTG, ICTRP, and Embase searches all had low retrieval of the included CTG references.

Intervention concept in Embase search used a NOT to exclude certain Emtree terms which excluded these 3 records

The record used “thoracoabdominal nerves block” but the search used TAP block. In CTG, they searched Transversus abdominis Plane Block (without quotes) which resulted in its retrieval

The Embase search included an outcomes concept, and none of the outcomes in this study were in that search concept. CTG search did not include an outcomes concept

The Embase search textword strings only used tw (not tw,kf) which would have retrieved 3 of these records. In 2 records, they used mesenchymal cells in tw or as an Emtree term but neither terms were in the search string

The story revealed

If we exclude the 1 low retrieval study (#16), the Embase search (without any study design filter) retrieved 97% (368 out of 379) CTG references from the 19 reviews.

The missed 11 references are explainable and could have been retrieved with different (reasonable) search changes.

This case study finds that Embase might have been sufficient to identify CTG records without searching the registry resource directly. This has potential implications for ease and delight in searching CTG records going forward.