

The InterTASC Information Specialists' Sub-Group Search Filter Resource: 15 years on

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Abstract

Search filters, to find studies of a specific design, are an essential tool in systematic searching for studies for evidence syntheses. Not all search filters, however, are equally effective.

In 2001, the InterTASC Information Specialists' Sub-Group (ISSG) was founded to bring together Information Specialists from research groups providing health technology assessments to the (now) UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and other associated Information Specialists with expertise in searching

to support evidence syntheses. It became apparent in early ISSG meetings that there was considerable duplication of effort across the groups in developing their own methodological search filters and concern about the challenges associated with identifying and evaluating existing methodological search filters. A number of members called for the development of a 'one-stop-shop' for methodological search filters. In 2006, the ISSG Search Filter Resource (ISSG SFR) was launched to:

- improve awareness of existing methodological search filters;
- reduce duplication of effort in methodological search filter design;

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- provide a forum for critical appraisal of methodological search filters; improve and build on existing methodological search filters;
- provide a 'one-stop-shop' for the identification of evaluated methodological search filters.

Methods

Saved searches to identify possibly eligible search filters are run monthly in CINAHL, Embase and MEDLINE. Tables of contents of relevant journals and current awareness lists are screened. Search results are scanned by the Editorial Team for eligible records and these are confirmed by JG and added to the ISSG SFR site.

Results

The ISSG SFR currently serves as a source of:

- methodological search filters (completed (published or unpublished) and in progress) e.g. for adverse events, diagnostic studies, economic evaluations, RCTs, systematic reviews etc.;
- bibliographic references to published filters, with links to the PubMed record or full-text where available on open access;
- contact information for developers of unpublished filters and filters in progress;
- independent abstracts and structured critical appraisals, drafted by ISSG members,
- for some of the methodological search filters (published and unpublished) e.g. the diagnostic studies section;
- references to research on the design, development and use of filters, including studies reporting comparative data from independent testing of search filters.

Discussion

Whilst methodological search filters remain the focus of the site, other related areas are being added and developed, e.g. filters for specific age groups, ethnic groups, geographic areas and links to collections of non-methodological clinical-topic-specific 'filters' or 'search blocks'.

Feedback from users of the site is welcomed, including information about filters not currently listed on the site, results of independent testing of existing filters and comments on usability of the site.

Alerting and user feedback options are currently under investigation together

with a plan to promote the site more through conference presentations, by using Twitter (@ISSG_Filters https://twitter.com/ISSG_Filters) and by sending regular messages to relevant e-mail discussion lists including the EAHIL discussion list.

The site has been managed by an Editorial Team comprising Julie Glanville, Carol Lefebvre and until December 2020, Kath Wright (CRD, University of York, UK).

The Editorial Team has recently been expanded to include Paul Manson, Sophie Robinson and Naomi Shaw.

Please visit the InterTASC Information Specialists' Search Filter Resource website at: <https://sites.google.com/a/york.ac.uk/issg-search-filters-resource/home>

Keywords: Evidence-Based-Medicine (EBM); Information Retrieval; Methodological Search Filters; Study Design; Systematic Searching.

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