The EMBASE subject heading **Systematic review**: Should we include it in our search filters?

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**BACKGROUND**

- The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) is a national body that provides Canada’s federal, provincial, and territorial health care decision makers with credible, impartial advice and evidence-based information about the effectiveness and efficiency of drugs and other health technologies.
- Information specialists at CADTH routinely conduct comprehensive searches in EMBASE for systematic reviews, and they have developed an EMBASE systematic review search filter to retrieve records of this publication type.
- EMBASE is a biomedical and pharmaceutical database. Bibliographic records in EMBASE are indexed with subject headings to facilitate retrieval by researchers. The subject heading Systematic review was introduced to the EMBASE thesaurus in 2003.
- A recently published systematic review filter tailored for EMBASE did not incorporate this subject heading.
- A need was identified to investigate Systematic review in terms of overall performance in retrieving systematic reviews and to determine the value of including it in established systematic review filters.

**OBJECTIVES**

- To assess the value of adding Systematic review to established EMBASE systematic review search filters.

**METHODS**

- A literature search was performed to find published research and documentation on the performance of Systematic review in EMBASE.
- Retrieval using the subject heading Systematic review on its own was compared with retrieval of the established filters without the subject heading in EMBASE from 2006 to June 2008.
- Individual subsets of unique records retrieved by Systematic review were extracted by random sample and screened for potential as systematic reviews as defined by the developers of the published systematic review filter.

- Three information specialists performed the literature search and testing of Systematic review in the EMBASE database. One research officer extracted the random samples and calculated the confidence intervals.

**RESULTS**

- The literature search did not identify any information on the performance of Systematic review in EMBASE.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- More systematic reviews were retrieved by the established search filters when the subject heading Systematic review was included.
- The small sample sizes used preclude extrapolation to the entire database.
- There is opportunity for more research in the area of EMBASE-specific search filter development and indexing patterns.

**REFERENCE**