**Table S1. Comparison of expert reviews, systematic reviews, and Cochrane Reviews.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aspect | Expert review1 | Reliable systematic review 2 | Unique to Cochrane Reviews |
| Question | Usually starts with general discussion | Starts with clear question or hypothesis | Required and PICO discussed with editors |
| Protocol | None | Completed before starting | Refereed and published |
| Methods | Vary and often not specified | Clearly defined methods | Standardised, and written by leading methodologists working collaboratively.Access to specific methods advice provided out of good will |
| Authors | Usually dominated by topic experts | Team includes methodologists | Team includes methodologists and topic experts, and sometimes consumers |
| Conflicts of interest | Generally poorly managed | Managed variably | Adhere to published conflicts of interest policy4 |
| Selecting studies to include | Inclusion criteria usually vague; does not describe why studies are excluded | Explicit inclusion criteria | Explicit inclusion criteria in the protocol and studies excluded and the reasons provided in the final review |
| Literature searches |  Usually not attempted | Strive to locate all relevant published (generally only in English-language journals) and unpublished data | Methods standardizedthroughout The Cochrane Collaboration, which include searching trials published in other languages and registered in a central database (CENTRAL) |
| Assessing risk of bias in studies | Usually does not consider differences in study methods or risk of bias | Investigation of risk of bias and sources of heterogeneity  | Systematic investigation of risk of bias and sources of heterogeneity is pre-specified and rigorously applied |
| Data synthesis | Often does not differentiate between methodologically sound and unsound studies  | Conclusions based only on methodologically sound studies | Conclusions based only on methodologically sound studies with routine sensitivity analysis |
| Formal appraisal of strength of evidence | Not done | Usually not done | Some new Reviews use GRADE methods and all new Reviews should use GRADE criteria to discuss results |
| Peer review | By content experts | Not always refereed by people familiar with systematic reviews | Includes peer review by systematic review specialists and often also consumers |
| Updates | Usually not available | None | Reviews in current topics are kept updated3  |
| Avoiding duplication | No mechanism to avoid duplication | No mechanism to avoid duplication | Cochrane mechanisms to avoid duplicate reviews.Updating also avoids waste. |

1 Sometimes called “narrative review”, “viewpoint”, “opinion”, “thorough review done by experts”.

2 The Cochrane Collaboration has established methods and software that are widely available.

3 From 2014, editorial teams will be able to categorise reviews that no longer need updating so that preferably reviews of current questions, where equipoise or uncertainty remains, will be updated.

4<http://www.cochrane.org/editorial-and-publishing-policy-resource/conflicts-interest-and-cochrane-reviews>