

REQUIREMENTS FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

The conduct of the research synthesis of test evaluation is more complex than the research synthesis of intervention studies. Furthermore, the quality of systematic reviews of diagnostic test accuracy published in the medical literature is currently poor (Mallett, BMJ 2006). In order to provide systematic reviews of diagnostic test accuracy of high quality, knowledge of the content, review process, searching, methodology of diagnostic research and statistics (i.e. research synthesis of diagnostic test accuracy) is needed within the review author team.

Expertise of the review author team

The Cochrane Collaboration developed requirements for the review author team. A title can only be registered if the review author team consist of authors with the following expertise:

- Content expertise (i.e. a clinician familiar with the target condition, specialist with experience in performing the (index and reference) test)
- Searching skills (i.e. Trial Search Coordinator)
- Review expertise (i.e. someone familiar with conducting a systematic review)
- Expertise of the methodology of diagnostic research (i.e. someone with expertise in the quality assessment using QUADAS, knowledge of the bias and variation in diagnostic research)
- Statistical expertise (i.e. statistician with knowledge of diagnostic research and diagnostic research synthesis)

Content of the title of the proposed review

The essence of the objective should be captured in the review's title. The key components will be the patients (how they present, where they present to, and what tests have been done before), the index test and any comparator tests, and the target condition the test is used for. The index test is the test that is being evaluated. The target condition is the condition of interest, for which the test is being considered. It could be a disease, a disease stage, or a form of disease eligible for a specific treatment. The comparator tests are any other tests that are being considered for the detection of the same target condition, excluding the reference standard.

The reference standard is the best available method for detecting the target condition. A gold standard is an error-free reference standard.

In RevMan, the headings for the title of the review are fixed making sure the title reflects the objective of the review (i.e. What is the diagnostic accuracy of 'Index test' for diagnosing 'target condition' in 'patient description?'). In RevMan (see Chapter 4), the following title options are given:

1. [Index test(s)] VERSUS [comparator(s)] FOR [target condition(s)] IN [patient description]
2. [Index test(s)] VERSUS [comparator(s)] FOR [target condition(s)]
3. [Index test(s)] FOR [target condition(s)] IN [patient description]
4. [Index test(s)] FOR [target condition(s)]

CRGs are encouraged to ask their DTA regional support unit for assistance in assessing the relevance of Title registration forms. Early intervention by experts at the title stage is hoped to help CRGs

- Identify DTA review teams with appropriate expertise and experience
- prevent the registration of DTA reviews that are not clinically important
- help the CRG and authors to prepare their protocol
- prevent protocols from being subject to multiple iterations of peer review and in house comments from both the CRG and the DTA Editorial team.