Assessing the performance of methodological search filters to improve the efficiency of evidence information retrieval: five literature reviews and a qualitative study


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Authors' objectives
Effective study identification is essential for conducting health research, developing clinical guidance and health policy and supporting health-care decision-making. Methodological search filters (combinations of search terms to capture a specific study design) can assist in searching to achieve this. This project investigated the methods used to assess the performance of methodological search filters, the information that searchers require when choosing search filters and how that information could be better provided.

Authors' conclusions
Search filter studies should use a representative reference standard and explicitly report methods and results. Performance measures should be presented systematically and clearly. Searchers find filters useful in certain circumstances but expressed a need for more user-friendly performance information to aid filter choice. We suggest approaches to use, adapt and report search filter performance. Future work could include research around search filters and performance measures for study designs not addressed here, exploration of alternative methods of displaying performance results and numerical synthesis of performance comparison results.

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