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The development of a prehospital search filter for the Cochrane Library

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Background

Prehospital care literature has increased by about 200 articles a decade.[5] Despite this steady growth, there are concerns about the quality of the research and the lack of evidence for many prehospital interventions. In recent years, several groups of researchers have sought to review prehospital based research literature.[1-6]

An analysis of the prehospital randomised trials identified by these studies has revealed gaps in the evidence base for current prehospital practice and policy. As well as a lack of randomised trials these studies question the scientific rigor of most prehospital research. For example, Brice et al's ten year analysis of prehospital studies indexed in MEDLINE showed that just over half of prehospital studies were retrospective and that just 15% of those remaining were randomised trials.[2]

A further issue is the accessibility of the literature. In a recent systematic review, Wilson et al found that only half of the prehospital research is even indexed in electronic databases.[6]

In this edition of Cochrane Corner we report on the development of a prehospital search filter. The scope of the filter is deliberately broad and many of the studies retrieved may not be relevant to the prehospital environment. However, the filter has been designed to identify reports of trials contained in *The Cochrane Library* with the purpose of assembling a register of prehospital trials. Improving the evidence base of prehospital care will require the preparation of systematic reviews and it's important that as many relevant trials as possible are considered for inclusion in these reviews. This search filter is likely to be modified over time as other sources are searched and we assess the retrieval rates of individual terms. Updated filters will be indicated by new version numbers. We invite you to use this search filter and ask that this paper be acknowledged as the source.

Prehospital Search Filter – Version 1.0

MeSH terms

#1 emergency medical services
#2 emergency medical technicians
#3 emergency treatment
#4 emergency medicine
#5 ambulances
#6 air ambulances
#7 first aid
#8 military medicine

Text terms

#9 prehospital
#10 pre-hospital
#11 paramedic*
#12 ambulance*
#13 out-of-hospital
#14 out of hospital
#15 ems
#16 emt
#17 emergency services

#18 emergency medical service*
#19 emergency technician*
#20 emergency practitioner
#21 emergency dispatch*
#22 emergency despatch*
#23 first responder*
#24 public access defibrillation
#25 emergency rescue
#26 emergency resus*
#27 emergency triage
#28 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or
#8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or
#14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20 or
#21 or #22 or #23 or #24 or #25 or #26 or #27

Glossary of Terms

MeSH = is the acronym for "Medical Subject Headings." MeSH is the authority list of terms used for subject analysis of the biomedical literature.

Text term = Allows you to search the text of literature for specified terms.

or = retrieves documents that contain at least one the specified search terms.
and = retrieves documents containing both terms.***** = the use of a symbol to search only part of a term to retrieve variant endings of that term.

Results

We have recently run this search using the Cochrane Library 2004, Issue 3. The search identified 3748 reports. We are currently assessing these reports to identify all systematic reviews and controlled trials that have been conducted in the prehospital environment. The search will also be used to identify systematic reviews and controlled trials which are relevant to Australian ambulance clinical practice guidelines. Results of this analysis will be published in the future.

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