Bahrain Medical Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 3, September 2008

Identifying Search Terms Likely to Retrieve Reports of Randomized Trials in Iranmedex – a Pilot Project

Mona Nasser, DDS* Anne Eisinga, BA Comb Hons.MSc** Amani Al-Hajeri, MD***
Zbys Fedorowicz, MSc DPH BDS****

Background: Recent studies have led to improvements in the international coverage of reports of randomized controlled trials retrieved from electronic databases in developing countries. The objective of this study was to identify search terms likely to retrieve reports of randomized controlled trials in Iranmedex which could ultimately be developed into a sensitive search strategy for this database.

Objective: The objective of this study was to identify a set of terms likely to retrieve reports of randomized controlled trials in Iranmedex, an Iranian healthcare database.

Method: We handsearched seven Iranian healthcare journals to identify reports of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and quasi-randomized trials (CCTs) and examined the reports in three of these journals for study design terms and selected those occurring most frequently to compile an initial set of search terms. We then used these terms to search Iranmedex for reports of trials in the remaining four journals plus the initial three from which the search terms were derived and compared results with our original handsearch of these journals. The electronic records of any reports of trials missed by this initial set of terms were examined for additional relevant search terms which might improve retrieval.

Result: In the first set of journals handsearched we identified six study design terms which occurred most frequently in the relevant studies: clinical trial, double blind, randomly, prospective, placebo. Improvements to the initial set of search terms could be made by adding the study design term ('cross over').

Conclusion: Electronic searches would be more efficient and effective if authors and editors were consistently to abide by the guidance provided in The CONSORT Statement. The possibility for researchers to search the full text electronically in Iranmedex would greatly improve retrieval as relevant study design terms were frequently only to be found in the full text of many of the journals indexed in Iranmedex.

Bahrain Med Bull 2008; 30(3):