

Letter to Editor

Neither Citing nor Discussing; That Is the Question!: Proposing a Mandatory Review

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During the last decade, systematic review and meta-analysis (SRM) had become one of the most popular types of scientific research, particularly in medical sciences as the milestone of evidence-based medicine.¹ Also the number of SRMs prospectively registered in the registries, e.g. PROSPERO, and those who follow the standards such as the PRISMA for providing a transparent report are increasing (Figure 1).

As a result of impressive increase in the number of SRMs, inconsistent results derived from overlapping SRMs on the same topic, have been growing recently.² This issue might provoke confusion in decision-making among medical practitioners and policy-makers. In fact, a majority of recent SRMs do not cite or discuss the previous SRMs on the same topic.³ In addition, SRM registration in appropriate registries such as PROSPERO is uncommon even in the published articles by the prestigious journals.⁴

To address this issue, journals could ask the authors to provide a comprehensive review of the published SRMs

on the same topic and compare their inclusion/exclusion criteria, study population, and outcome with previous studies. This could be requested in a typical universal format, and would urge the authors to scientifically justify their replicated work and highlight their novel finding compared to older studies. This strategy might reduce the number of useless and repetitive SRMs that waste endeavor and funds but add nothing to the literature, and could even increase confusing contradictions.

To put it simply, citing and discussing the previous systematic reviews and meta-analyses on the same topic by the recent ones, might prevent discordant or replicated publications. Beside the SRM registration, protocol publishing, and fulfilling standard guidelines such as PRISMA, we also suggest a mandatory section of review and convincing discussion of the previous SRMs to improve the future value of SRMs.

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to the work equally and met the criteria for authorship according to ICMJE recommendation.

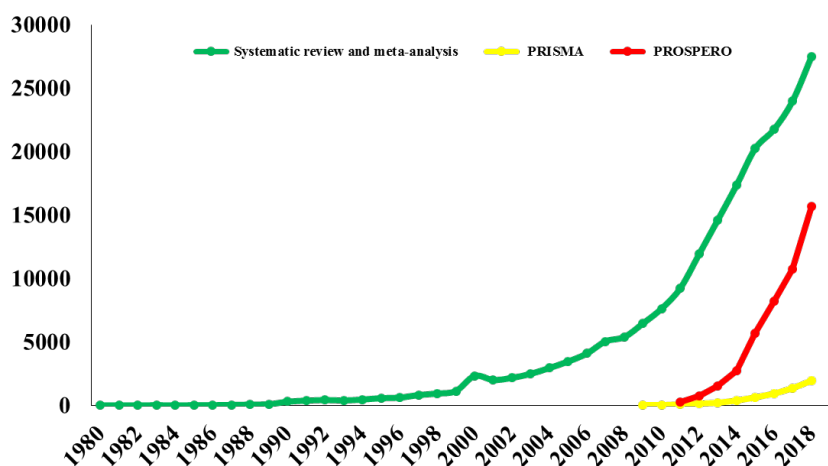


Figure 1. Total Number of Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (SRMs) Indexed in the PubMed, Total Number of SRMs Mentioned Using the PRISMA Checklist, and Total Number of Records in the PROSPERO.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures

None.

Ethical Statement

Not applicable.

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