Reporting Checklist for Meta-analyses of Observational Studies

Reporting of background should include

- Problem definition (page 3)
- Hypothesis statement (page 3)
- Description of study outcome (page 3)
- Type of exposure or intervention used (page 4)
- Type of study designs used (page 4)

Study population Reporting of search strategy should include

- Qualifications of searchers (eg, librarians and investigators) (qualifications given on title page – all researchers are experienced academic laboratory physicians)
- Search strategy, including time period included in the synthesis and keywords (page 4)
- Effort to include all available studies, including contact with authors (page 4)
- Databases and registries searched (page 4)
- Search software used, name and version, including special features used (eg, explosion) (page 4)
- Use of hand searching (eg, reference lists of obtained articles) (page 4)
- List of citations located and those excluded, including justification (pages 4, 18, 19 and 20)
- Method of addressing articles published in languages other than English (page 4)
- Method of handling abstracts and unpublished studies (page 4)

Description of any contact with authors Reporting of methods should include

- Description of relevance or appropriateness of studies assembled for assessing the hypothesis to be tested (page 4)
- Rationale for the selection and coding of data (eg, sound clinical principles or convenience) (not applicable)
Documentation of how data were classified and coded (eg, multiple raters, blinding, and interrater reliability) *(page 4)*

Assessment of confounding (eg, comparability of cases and controls in studies where appropriate) *(not applicable)*

Assessment of study quality, including blinding of quality assessors: stratification or regression on possible predictors of study results *(not applicable)*

Assessment of heterogeneity *(page 6)*

Description of statistical methods (eg, complete description of fixed or random effects models, justification of whether the chosen models account for predictors of study results, dose-response models, or cumulative meta-analysis) in sufficient detail to be replicated *(pages 6 and 7)*

Provision of appropriate tables and graphics Reporting of results should include

- Graphic summarizing individual study estimates and overall estimate *(page 22)*
- Table giving descriptive information for each study included *(page 20)*
- Results of sensitivity testing (eg, subgroup analysis) *(not applicable)*
- Indication of statistical uncertainty of findings *(page 6)*
- Quantitative assessment of bias (eg, publication bias) *(page 24)*
- Justification for exclusion (eg, exclusion of non-English-language citations) *(page 4)*
- Assessment of quality of included studies *(not applicable)*
- Consideration of alternative explanations for observed results *(page 7)*
- Generalization of the conclusions <ie, appropriate for the data presented and within the domain of the literature review) *(pages 8 and 9)*
- Guidelines for future research *(not applicable)*
- Disclosure of funding source *(not applicable)*