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Creation of a register on alcohol-impaired driving

Alcohol-impaired driving is a serious problem for industrialized nations. Of the 39,189 fatal crashes in the US last year, 39% were alcohol related. Initial searches, which focused on hand searching, US agency contacts and two electronic databases, have already yielded 212 studies. During this year, we will complete screening and indexing of the citations identified by our initial searches, and expand organizational and agency contacts. Subsequent maintenance of the register will include periodic updating of both electronic searches and contacts with agencies and organizations. We also welcome submissions from readers to Cynthia Goss (Cynthia.goss@uchsc.edu) or Karen Blackhall (Karen.Blackhall@ilstu.edu).

As a first step in the creation of the register, we applied objective methods of developing search strategies to create a sensitive, free-text search strategy that could be applied to multiple electronic bibliographic databases in different fields. We have thus far applied our search strategy to seven traditional and five gray-literature databases; these searches will be periodically updated in future. Search results are being screened for eligible studies, including randomized controlled trials, controlled trials, controlled before–after studies and interrupted time series studies. Even though randomized controlled trials provide the most reliable evidence on the effectiveness of interventions, they are not always feasible in the evaluation of strategies to prevent alcohol-impaired driving, many of which involve policy and legislative interventions. Hence, a broader range of study designs is being included. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which can be a rich source of relevant references for further reviews as well as a resource for identifying evidence-based interventions, will also be included in the register.

To develop as comprehensive a register as possible, we are also identifying studies through means other than electronic searches. Proceedings from 7 years of the International Conference on Drugs, Alcohol, and Traffic Safety and 2 years of the Conference on World Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion have been hand searched. We have contacted traffic research institutes and more than 100 state departments of transportation, public health and public safety in the US, and will begin to contact agencies and organizations worldwide this year. All citations identified through searching databases, hand searching, and contacting organizations and agencies are screened to determine eligibility, using information given in the title, abstract and subject headings of the citation or in full texts where available. All included studies are indexed by type of intervention (eg, community-based program, laws on blood alcohol content) and type of study design. The register is being incorporated into the specialised register of the Cochrane Injuries Group, where it will be widely accessible to researchers and policy makers.