

## **A Comparison of Handsearching Versus EMBASE Searching of the Bahrain Medical Bulletin to Identify Reports of Randomized Controlled Trials**

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**Objective:** The aim of this study is to identify reports of randomized controlled trials by hand searching the Bahrain Medical Bulletin and to determine the added value of the hand searching in minimizing the effects of indexing bias.

**Methods:** All issues of the BMB were searched by hand from cover to cover for reports of trials. These were classified as randomized controlled trials (RCTs) or controlled clinical trials (CCTs) according to the Cochrane eligibility criteria. Photocopies of the bibliographic details and of the pages describing the study design of the reports identified were sent to the UK Cochrane Centre for verification and submission to the US Cochrane Center for publication in CENTRAL in The Cochrane Library. EMBASE and CENTRAL were also searched to identify if the reports found by the handsearch were already included in either of these databases.

**Results:** Sixteen trials out of 395 articles were identified, 12 RCTs and 4 CCTs. The added value of the handsearch in relation to EMBASE was 13 of the 16 (81%), and that for CENTRAL was 8 of 16 (50%).

**Conclusion:** Handsearching provides a valuable and unique contribution from the Arab region to the global effort by the Cochrane Collaboration. The handsearching of this journal, should help reviewers to minimize the effects of publication bias by providing reports of trials not previously identified. The handsearching has also ensured that reports of trials will not remain 'buried' because of indexing bias.