

Identifying review questions for future Cochrane reviews on groin and ventral hernia surgery: a meta-epidemiological study

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Background

Hernia surgery significantly influences quality of life and healthcare costs. Informed clinical decision-making relies on evidence-based practices, which are often supported by Cochrane reviews. Despite their pivotal role, the number of Cochrane reviews on hernia management is limited.

Objectives

To systematically develop a shortlist of review questions for future Cochrane reviews specifically addressing critical questions and evidence gaps in groin and ventral hernia surgery.

Additionally, we aim to demonstrate and showcase a novel systematic framework for review question development for Cochrane reviews.

Methods

The study will be reported according to the Guidelines for reporting meta-epidemiological methodology research. First, we will systematically identify all published and upcoming Cochrane protocols and reviews on groin or ventral hernia management. Second, recognized international clinical guidelines will be reviewed by an expert committee, and clinical domains of interest for further study will be identified based on prespecified criteria. Third, we will systematically search ClinicalTrials.gov and Cochrane CENTRAL for randomised controlled trials on groin or ventral hernia management. Trials will be mapped to relevant Cochrane protocols, Cochrane reviews, or clinical domains of interest identified by the expert committee. Fourth, we will draft a longlist of potential review questions for future Cochrane reviews based on the identified clinical domains of interest and trial availability. Last, the longlist will be presented to a stakeholder panel including clinicians and guideline developers, who will be prompted to prioritise each proposed review question according to perceived clinical relevance. All review

questions where a consensus for high priority is obtained will be added to a final shortlist of review questions.

Conclusions

This study will produce a shortlist of review questions for future Cochrane reviews pertaining to groin and ventral hernia management. All review questions will be firmly rooted in available randomised controlled trials, and we will ensure that each review question is both accessible and feasible to execute for prospective authors. This will promote the production of clinically important Cochrane reviews in the field, and thereby advancing the knowledge base in hernia surgery through coordinated efforts and synergy. This study presents a novel systematic framework for review question development.

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Domain

Harnessing the Power of Synergy in Evidence Synthesis and Guideline Development