Assessment of risk of bias in comparative diagnostic accuracy systematic reviews: an overview of reviews

Background & aim

• Comparative diagnostic test accuracy systematic reviews (DTA reviews) should assess the risk of bias (RoB) of test comparisons in included studies.
• We investigated how comparative DTA reviews assessed the RoB of test comparisons in primary studies.

Methods

• We included comparative DTA reviews indexed in MEDLINE from January 1st to December 31st 2017.
• Two assessors independently identified comparative DTA reviews and extracted data on methods used to assess RoB.

Results

• We included 238 comparative DTA reviews.
• Only two reviews (0.8%) conducted RoB assessment of test comparisons undertaken in primary studies.
• Neither used a RoB tool specifically designed to assess bias in test comparisons.

Conclusion

RoB assessment of test comparisons is uncommon in comparative DTA reviews. Guidance on how to assess and incorporate RoB in comparative DTA reviews is needed.