Table. A Proposed Reporting Checklist for Authors, Editors, and Reviewers of Meta-analyses of Observational Studies

Reporting of background should include
Problem definition
Hypothesis statement
Description of study outcome(s)
Type of exposure or intervention used
Type of study designs used
Study population
Reporting of search strategy should include
Qualifications of searchers (eg, librarians and investigators)
Search strategy, including time period included in the synthesis and keywords
Effort to include all available studies, including contact with authors
Databases and registries searched
Search software used, name and version, including special features used (eg, explosion)
Use of hand searching (eg, reference lists of obtained articles)
List of citations located and those excluded, including justification
Method of addressing articles published in languages other than English
Method of handling abstracts and unpublished studies
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
Rationale for the selection and coding of data (eg, sound clinical principles or convenience)
Documentation of how data were classified and coded (eg, multiple raters, blinding, and interrater reliability)
Assessment of confounding (eg, comparability of cases and controls in studies where appropriate)
Assessment of study quality, including blinding of quality assessors; stratification or regression on possible predictors of study results
Assessment of heterogeneity
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
Provision of appropriate tables and graphics
Reporting of results should include
Graphic summarizing individual study estimates and overall estimate
Table giving descriptive information for each study included
Results of sensitivity testing (eg, subgroup analysis)
Indication of statistical uncertainty of findings
Reporting of discussion should include
Quantitative assessment of bias (eg, publication bias)
Justification for exclusion (eg, exclusion of non–English-language citations)
Assessment of quality of included studies
Reporting of conclusions should include
Consideration of alternative explanations for observed results
Generalization of the conclusions (ie, appropriate for the data presented and within the domain of the literature review)
Guidelines for future research
Disclosure of funding source