

# Assessing searches in Single Technology Appraisals: a comparative study of UK and German checklists



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## Background

A published checklist was developed based on the themes from a study (Wong, Paisley & Carroll, 2013) that incorporates reporting, source and search strategy elements for the assessment of manufacturer searches in the NICE Single Technology Appraisals.

The appraisal of searches in the manufacturers' dossiers is carried out by the Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG). The checklist used by IQWiG was developed in-house (unpublished) for the appraisal of the manufacturers' searches.

This study sets out to compare and contrast the published and IQWiG checklists to show the approaches applied in the assessment of manufacturers' searches and to identify their differences and applicability.

A checklist from IQWiG in June 2013 was translated into English.

Comparisons were made on:

- Format, layout and organisation,
- Types of checklist elements (e.g. reporting)
- Checklist elements in both checklists
- Checklist elements not covered in both checklists

## Comparisons

	UK checklist (Wong, Paisley & Carroll 2013)	IQWiG checklist
<b>Layout and organisation</b>	A single table containing a list of 37 questions 12 major themes (headings) in a Word document with yes, no and comment columns.	Four tables in each Excel worksheet (each table comprises multiple headings): i) Hit overview ii) Bibliographic reference management database iii) Assessing the search reporting (approximately 25 questions under 9 separate headings with columns for searches for direct and indirect comparisons and further topics iv) Assessing the search approach and strategy development (approximately 27 questions under 4 separate headings).
<b>Checklist elements</b>	Twelve elements, six relating to strategy (overall strategy, PICO, subject headings, free-text usage, syntax, strategy structure), source, limits, filters, translation, reporting, and missing studies.	Accuracy and consistency of information reported in the dossier and actual number of records (and within reference management database). Assessing the accuracy, consistency and completeness of searches in the manufacturer's dossier text and appendices and the development of the search approach and strategy.

### UK only

Strategy – PICO (conceptual grouping of terms) for clinical and cost effectiveness searches

### Elements in both checklists

Reporting of searches  
 Strategy - subject headings  
 Strategy - free-text terms  
 Strategy – syntax  
 Strategy – structure  
 Source  
 Limits  
 Filters  
 Translation  
 Missing studies

### IQWiG only

Cross-checking of references against original source  
  
 Simple searches in clinical trials registers and PubMed to verify completeness of the search where required (Waffenschmidt *et al.*, 2013)

## Summary

Both checklists are similar:

- Assessment of the reporting of searches carried out in databases, searching for unpublished sources such as trial registers.
- Appraisal of the search strategy and to a lesser extent, the types of sources searched.

Differences:

- Verification of the consistency of the reporting of searches against the results retrieved from the searches.
- Searches to verify completeness (clinical trials registers and PubMed).

## Conclusion

The IQWiG checklist comprises elements that are similar to the published STA checklist in terms of the evaluation of the reporting and development of the search strategy.

## References

- Wong R, Paisley S, Carroll C. (2013) Assessing Searches in NICE Single Technology Appraisals: Practice and Checklist. *International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care*. **29**(3):315-322.  
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