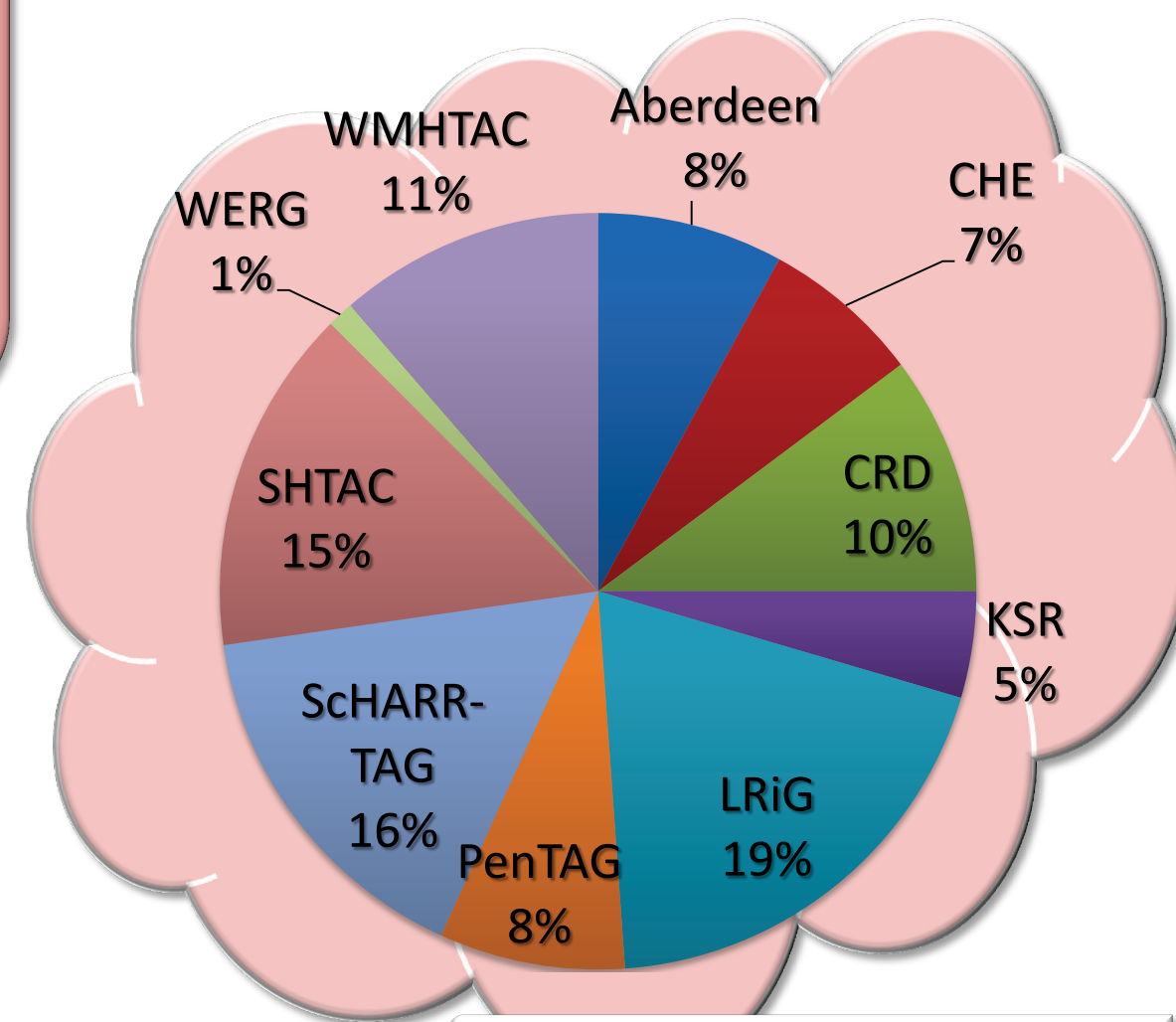
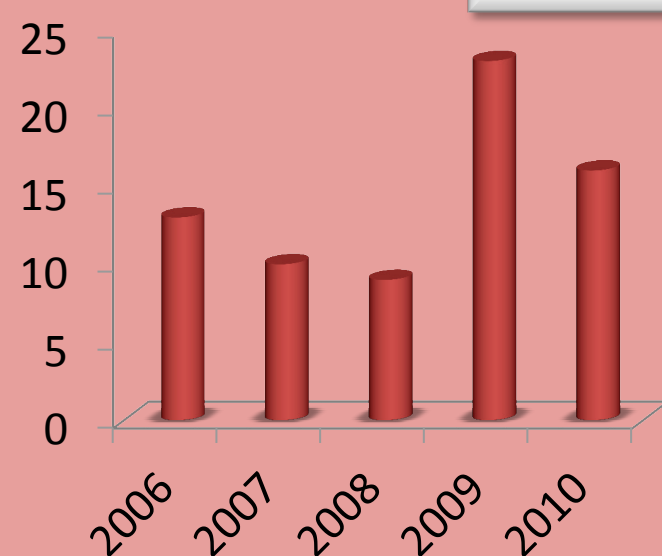


Assessing searches in NICE Single Technology Appraisals: practice and checklist

Ruth Wong, Suzy Paisley and Christopher Carroll
SchARR, University of Sheffield, UK

1. Analysis of the ERG (Evidence Review Group) reports of manufacturers' submission (MS) searches shows what manufacturers do in terms of searching, what ERGs do in relation to appraising searches and how they report on the appraisal process.

Distribution of reports
between 2006-2010



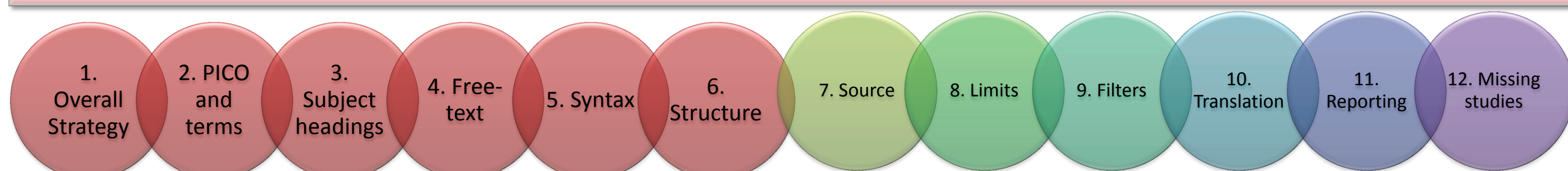
Distribution of 88 STAs by ERGs

Approach

2. Limitations from search critiques in 83 (94%) of the 88 ERG reports between 2006 and May 2011 were extracted and grouped into themes.

Themes

3. Twelve themes were identified, six themes closely related to the search strategy theme with the most limitations.



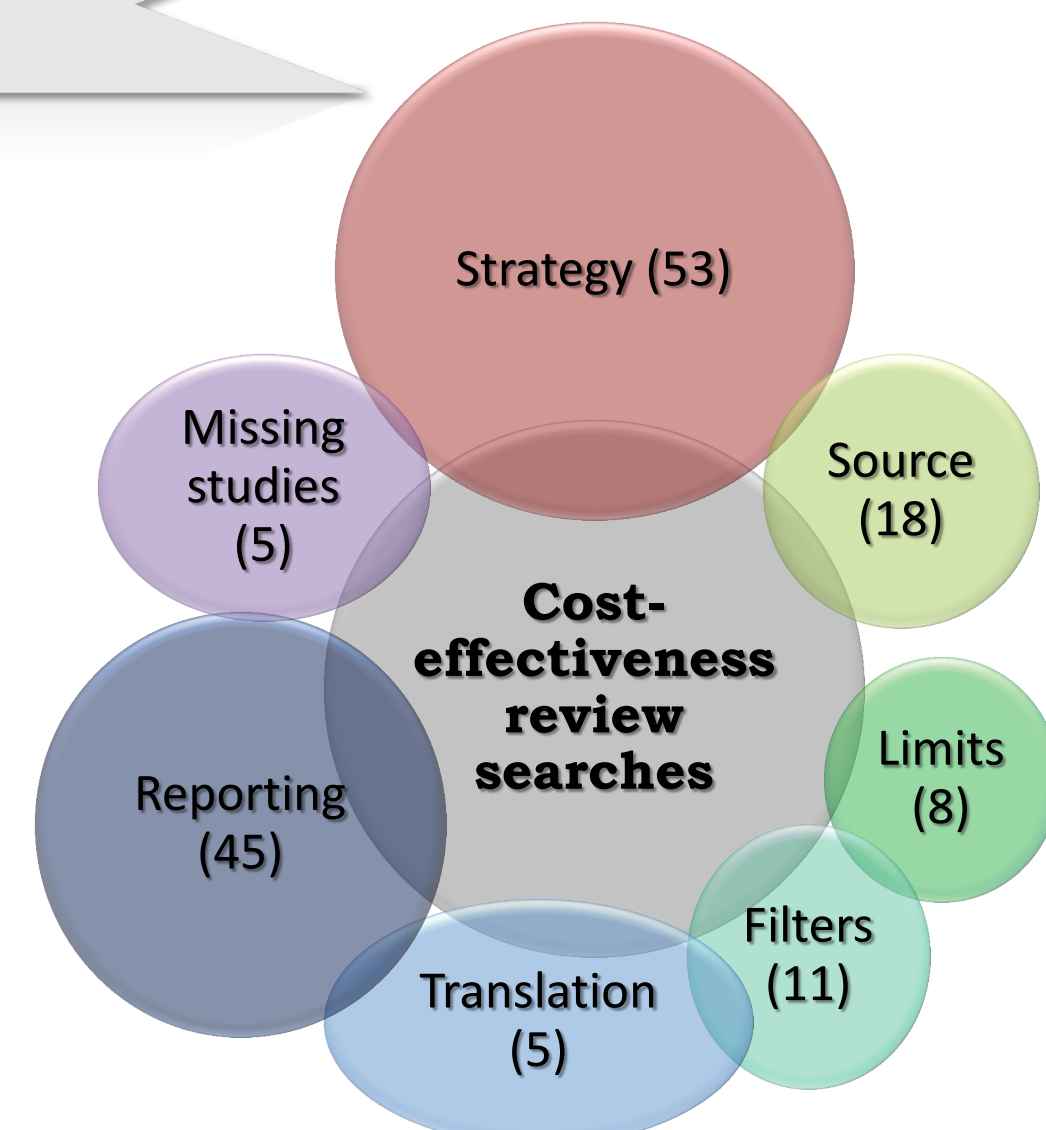
Comparisons

Limitations reported in the MS searches by the ERGs



4. Key limitations relate to either **omissions** (comprehensiveness of search) and **missing full strategies** (lack transparency and careful documentation of the MS's search process): common in both clinical and cost effectiveness reviews.

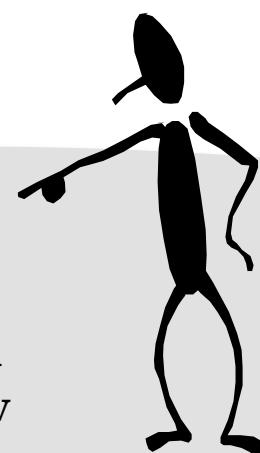
5. Search strategy theme: the most frequent limitations relate to the failure to use subject headings or thesauri, missing free-text terms, errors in database syntax and errors in the combination of lines in statements which will have an impact on the recall and/or precision of the search.



6. The wide range of limitations identified reflects the importance of the information specialists' role within the ERG team in assessing the quality of the manufacturers' searches.

Checklist

8. A checklist based on the themes developed from this study that incorporates both search strategy and reporting elements was created. Below are examples of questions from each theme.



7. The appraisal should consist of two key elements: an assessment of the actual reporting of the searches undertaken and a structured critical appraisal of the actual strategy (including sources).

Reporting: Were strategies as described in methods fully provided?

Overall strategy: Was the strategy clear?

PICO and terms: Were terms used correctly and necessary?

Free-text terms: Were there free-text terms missing?

Subject headings: Were any subject headings/thesauri missing?

Syntax: Was the syntax used correctly?

Structure: Were Boolean operators used correctly?

Source: Were sources missing in the methods?

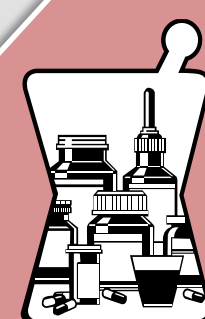
Limits: Were limits applied appropriate and justified?

Filters: Was the filter applied appropriate and sensitive?

Translation: Was translation between databases correct?

Missing studies: Were any missing studies found?

Implications



9. Manufacturers, agencies, information specialists involved in HTAs will be aware of potential limitations relating to the search methodology - this would improve the efficiency of the STA process.

10. This study provides a checklist for HTA practice in the UK and other countries such as France, Australia and Canada.

Contact us: ruth.wong@sheffield.ac.uk
www.sheffield.ac.uk/heds

[@scharrheds](https://twitter.com/scharrheds)
www.scharrheds.blogspot.co.uk

