Southern & South East Asia

Almost 1/3 of the world’s population
Not even 1/3 of their trials are in CENTRAL

Background
Practihc\(^1\) is an EU funded project, part of which sought to identify randomised trials or controlled clinical trials (RCTs/CCTs) from low and middle income countries. As part of this project bibliographic databases other than CENTRAL have been searched for trials.

Objective
To identify RCTs/CCTs in the WHO HELLIS Network’s Index Medicus for South-East Asia Region (IMSEAR).
To identify whether these are disseminated within CENTRAL

Method
The online database was searched, records downloaded and manually inspected.
We searched CENTRAL for the identified trials.

Search terms
randomi$ OR double-blind OR assign$ OR allocate$

Results I
Records in IMSEAR date from 1980 to 1995
We found 642 unique records
558 seem to be RCTs/CCTs
156 (28%) were found in CENTRAL
Health issues addressed in these trials are numerous and include management of pain, heart disease and infectious diseases.

Conclusions
CENTRAL remains a considerable resource for those wishing to identify RCTs/CCTs
Other work has found CENTRAL not to be comprehensive for trials from Bulgaria, China, Hungary, Korea, Poland, and the Ukraine - this study demonstrates that Southern and SE Asia can now also be added to this growing list
Omission of such trials from CENTRAL leaves Cochrane reviews vulnerable to random error and bias

Results II
CENTRAL included relatively few of the citations from Thailand and Indonesia
Many databases specific to Thailand have yet to be systematically searched