Figure 2. Details of the search and classification of IMPF articles

Databases searched using Keywords

Search for IPD meta-analysis articles from 2005 to March 2009 using Medline, Embase and Cochrane library

1420 Potentially relevant articles – after duplicates removed

Abstract of papers read and classified as an IPD meta-analysis or not

Stage 1:
Initial Search

263 Yes
75 Unsure
16 No abstract
1066 No

Stage 2:
Initial classification by first author

Stage 3:
Double checking of classifications by second author

192 Yes
21 Unsure
1207 No

Stage 4:
Obtain full ‘unsure’ article to check

203 Yes
1217 No

Stage 5:
Combine with existing IPD meta-analysis database up to March 2005

199 articles from existing database
(excluding 20 duplicates)

383 Yes
(383) Google search using ‘individual patient data meta-analysis’

Primary objective to assess prognostic ability of one or more factors?

Stage 6:
Classification by first author of prognostic factor article or not

52 Yes
331 No

Stage 7:
Double checking by second author & reference check

48 Yes
337 No

(4 aetiological studies; 2 studies of treatments to modify a prognostic factor)