Initial potential relevant articles (n = 1766):
- Medline (n = 121)
- AMED (n = 1)
- Cochrane (n = 3)
- EMBASE (n = 93)
- CNKI (n = 720)
- CBM (n = 428)
- CMCC (n = 247)
- TCMOnline (n = 153)

Publications excluded after screening the title and abstract (n = 1455):
- Review articles (n = 45);
- Non clinical trials (n = 301);
- Inappropriate population, intervention and outcome measure (n = 974);
- Duplicates (n = 135)

Full-text for detailed evaluation (n = 311)

Publications excluded (n = 288):
- Non RCTs (n = 41);
- Intervention not meeting inclusion criteria (n = 7);
- Patient not diagnosed LF (n = 55);
- CHM used in the control group (n = 123);
- Control group not Western medicine, placebo or no intervention (n = 40);
- Other reasons (n = 22)

Publications selected for appraisal (n = 23):
- Chinese studies (n = 22);
- English studies (n = 1)

Trials included in meta-analysis (n = 21):
- CHM versus Western medicine (n = 6);
- CHM combined with Western medicine versus Western medicine (n = 14);
- CHM versus placebo (n = 3)