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## Original Article

# Overviews of reviews on patient compliance with medication protocols used in highly active antiretroviral therapy

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To provide evidence support for the development of clinical practice guidelines regarding patient adherence to medication protocols used in highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) in China.

**Methods:** We analyzed information contained in recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses regarding patient compliance with medication protocols used in HAART.

**Results:** Nine systematic reviews and one meta-analysis were included in our study which involved three different aspects of patient compliance: influencing factors, assessment methods, and interventions.

**Conclusions:** The high quality data obtained from our study was suitable for use in developing clinically useful guidelines for patient compliance with HAART medication protocols.

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## 1. Introduction

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a serious infectious disease caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) [1,2]. Highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) is the most effective means of treating AIDS, and a patient's adherence to a HAART medication protocol is a key factor determining the success of HAART [3]. While there are numerous meta-analyses and reports concerning adherence

to HAART protocols by patients in Western countries, no similar reports have been published regarding AIDS patients in China [4]. Meanwhile, people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in China have become more reliant on HAART [5]. Therefore, it is necessary to summarize the existing systematic reviews and meta-analyses related to patient compliance with HAART protocols and provide evidence needed to support the development of clinically useful guidelines for patient compliance in China. An overview of reviews is a methodology used for systematically collecting literature reviews which focus on

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the treatment, etiology, diagnosis, and prognosis of a particular disease, and then conducting a comprehensive study of the data [6,7]. Our current study summarized the existing systematic reviews and meta-analyses related patient compliance with HAART medication protocols.

## 2. Design and methods

### 2.1. Criteria for considering studies for this review

#### 2.1.1. Types of studies

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses were included in this study. Systematic reviews of treatment protocols and traditional reviews were excluded.

#### 2.1.2. Types of participants

HIV/AIDS positive adults, diagnosed according to Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of HIV-infected adults in China [8].

#### 2.1.3. Themes

Themes related to HAART medication adherence; including influencing factors, measurement methods, and interventions.

### 2.2. Searching strategies

The following electronic databases were searched for relevant information starting from the date of database establishment and ending June 30, 2014: The Cochrane Library (Issue 6, 2014); The Joanna Briggs Institute Library; MEDLINE; Embase; ProQuest; PsycARTICLES; CBM; CNKI. The main search terms were as follows: “acquired immunodeficiency syndrome/HIV/highly active antiretroviral therapy”; “adherence/persistence/compliance/dropout”; “review/meta-analysis.”

We searched the reference lists of studies included in all relevant systematic reviews and meta-analyses.

### 2.3. Data collection and analysis

Studies were selected based on criteria separately developed by two authors of this paper (Liang Fu, Yan Hu). The third author (Hong-zhou Lu) resolved any disagreements. The full text of each article was obtained, and the data were extracted and managed using Windows Excel. The extracted information included the article title, year of publication, author, author's country/region, the number of included studies, and theme.

### 2.4. Critical appraisal for quality of included systematic reviews

The quality of each analyzed study was independently assessed by two authors of this manuscript (Liang Fu, Yan Hu) using the Oxman-Guyatt Overview Quality Assessment Questionnaire (OQAQ) [9,10]. The third author (Hong-zhou Lu) resolved any disagreements. Oxman et al. developed the OQAQ in 1988 for use in assessing the scientific quality of research overviews. Later, the OQAQ was adapted to include

10 items in the following 9 different areas related to study searches: search methods; comprehensive search; inclusion criteria; selection bias; validity criteria; validity assessment; methods used to combine studies; conclusion; overall scientific quality. These 9 items were either designated as appropriate or omitted based on the specific conditions used for a including a systematic review or meta-analysis. The last item (overall scientific quality) was rated on a scale of 1–7, with the score being based on the previous nine items. A higher score suggested the review or meta-analysis was of higher quality.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Results of searching

Among 2630 studies identified in the original search; 2623 studies were written in English and 7 studies were in Chinese. Ninety-three studies were removed using Noteexpress 2.2 via duplicate checking. Additionally, 2494 studies were excluded after the title and abstract were judged to be incongruent with the study type, design, participants or theme. Another seven studies were excluded for similar reasons after reading the full text. Finally, a total of 10 studies [11–20] were included in our final analysis. A flowchart depicting our screening process is shown in Fig. 1.

### 3.2. Included studies

The 10 included studies involved a total of 295 subjects, and were conducted in the USA, Britain, France, Canada, and South Africa. Each study described the characteristics of the

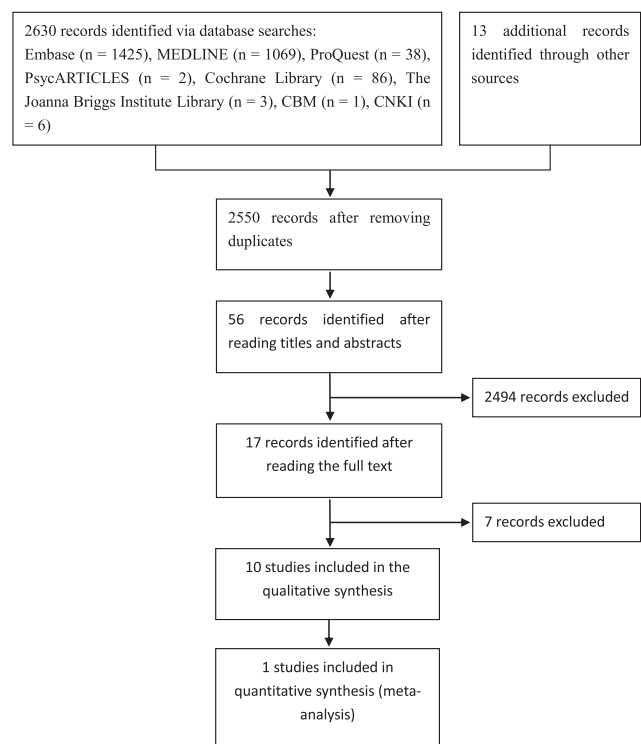


Fig. 1 – Study flow diagram.

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