

Search strategy

We searched the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) Cochrane Library Issue 1 2003, and we also searched PUBMED from 1966 to 2004 and EMBASE from 1973 to 2004. The date of the last search was June 2004. We searched for all RCTs and controlled clinical trials of surgical treatment. We used the terms “Otitis Media with Effusion”, “glue ear”, “serous otitis”, and “secretory otitis” as headings, and 8 separate headings for “grommets”, and “ventilation tubes”. To be selected for the IPD meta-analysis, trials had to be randomised to a high standard. Trials had to include children aged 0–12 years of age with tympanometrically and/or otoscopically confirmed persistent bilateral OME, and the comparison had to be between short term ventilation tubes (VT) and watchful waiting (WW).