Purpose of effectiveness guidance

- Summarise existing methods and provide further guidance for dealing with heterogeneous study designs in effectiveness reviews, especially those of complex interventions.
- Summarise existing methods and provide further guidance for choosing an appropriate method for evidence synthesis in effectiveness reviews, especially those of complex interventions.

Steps to facilitate choosing appropriate methods for study design inclusion and evidence synthesis.

1. Conducting a comprehensive scope of the effectiveness assessment
2. (Conditionally) specifying methods a priori
3. Gaining a thorough understanding of characteristics of available methods
4. Search and identification of included primary studies
5. Assessing methodological and clinical heterogeneity in identified evidence base
6. Specifying final decision on methods

Added value of guidance

- Provides a summary of methods for dealing with heterogeneous study designs and synthesizing evidence.
- While recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, the guidance helps the reviewer in choosing appropriate study design inclusion and evidence synthesis methods.
- Argues that some flexibility in choosing methods may allow reviewers to utilize the most appropriate methods using the best available evidence.
- This guidance can be applied in a stand-alone assessment of effectiveness, but may be of most value as part of an integrated assessment.