

Question

We are discussing the assessment of the risk of bias tool. Furlan 2009 gave the recommendation that “studies are rated as having a “low risk of bias” when at least 6 of the 12 CBRG criteria have been met and the study has no serious flaws..”. The updated article, Furlan 2015, does not state this and we are confused how to interpret RoB for an individual study.

Answer

There are 13 questions (including other) that correspond to 5 domains for ROB: we usually make the assessment at domain level. Several questions might refer to a domain.

The reason we no longer have a cut point to determine an overall "label" at study level is because we don't consider that useful: we discourage making a global assessment on whether studies are at "low" or "high" risk of bias. Instead, we follow the GRADE framework to incorporate the risk of bias decision when assessing the confidence on each result. At this point, you need to make an assessment on your level of confidence of the body of evidence with respect to study limitation and decide if you need to downgrade or not, and if you downgrade, whether you do it for one or two levels.