

Search in electronic databases and on Websites of Clearinghouses: n=669 citations

- MEDLINE: n=289 citations
- National Guideline Clearinghouse: n=117 citations
- Agency for Quality in Medicine (Germany): n=29 citations
- Guideline International Network: n=11 citations
- HSTAT and DARE: n=76 citations
- The Cochrane Library: n=147 citations

Hand searches:
n=30 citations

N=699 citations

n=647 irrelevant citations excluded after checking for title and abstract and removal of duplicates

n=52 potentially relevant citations identified after liberal screening

Not included in evaluation but used for background information:
n=14 guidelines on specific aspects of heart failure management

n=38 retrieved for in-/exclusion by two independent reviewers

Formal exclusion n=22 guidelines:
n=5 guidelines: no clear link between recommendation and supporting evidence
n=9 guidelines: last update before 2000
n=5 guidelines: publication language different from German or English
n=1 guideline: for in-patient care only
n=1 guideline: invalid version, timed out by an update
n=1 guideline, as it was an adaptation of another already included guideline

n=16 guidelines fulfilled formal inclusion and exclusion criteria