**Step 1: Identify comparisons**

* Decompression only
* Decompression with fusion

**Step 2: Identify outcomes and effect measures**

* Pain (MD)
* Disability (MD)
* Reoperation rate (OR)
* Complication rate (OR)
* Blood loss during surgery (MD)
* Length of hospital stay (MD)
* Duration of surgery (MD)

**Step 3: Collect data from each relevant study**

See the Excel file for the best approach to extracting data.

**Step 4: Combine the results to obtain the summary of effect**

* Is all data available?
* Were the same scales used?
* Change from baseline or post-intervention scores? (Watch out for direction)
* What length of follow-up?
* Intention-to treat data or per-protocol data?
* Are the studies of the same study design (do not pool RCT and observational)?
* Heterogeneity and choosing random or fixed effects model
* Interpreting subgroup analyses

**Step 5: Choosing a statistical method**

Mostly Mantel-Haenszel