Table 3. GRADE assessment of the certainty of evidence for the anxiety outcome.

Certainty assessment								No. of patients		Effect	Certainty of evidence	Importance
Outcome	No. of studies	Study design	Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision	Publication bias	EG	CG	Absolute (95% CI)		
Anxiety	18	Randomised trials	Serious[a]	Serious[b]	Not serious	Not serious	Not serious[c]	693	674	SMD −0.65 (−0.87 to −0.42)	⨁⨁◯◯ (Low)	Critical

CG: control group; CI: confidence interval; EG: experimental group; SMD: standardised mean difference

[a] Downgraded 1 level for serious risk of bias because no included trial was judged to be at low overall risk of bias.

[b] Downgraded 1 level for serious inconsistency because substantial between-study heterogeneity was observed (I^2=72.2%).

[c] Publication bias was not considered serious because neither Begg's test (*P*=0.762) nor Egger's test (*P*=0.478) was statistically significant, and the trim-and-fill analysis did not impute any studies. However, publication bias could not be completely ruled out.