Supplementary Figure 1. Flowchart showing the study selection process.

1. **Identification**
   - Articles identified through PubMed database searching (n=48)

2. **Screening**
   - Articles screened at title and abstract level (n=48)
     - Articles excluded (n=33)
       - Irrelevant articles retrieved from PubMed database

3. **Eligibility**
   - Full text articles assessed for eligibility (n=15)
     - Full text articles excluded (n=6)
       - Studies performed only in critically ill patients (n=2)
       - Data not reported in terms of clinical outcomes (n=2)
       - Comments (n=2)

4. **Included**
   - Studies included in meta-analysis (n=9)