

## **Additional file 1. Search strategy**

### **1.1. PubMed (from inception to November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016)**

(1) laser [MeSH Terms]	44,582
(2) laser therapy [MeSH Terms]	53,144
(3) laser light [MeSH Terms]	13,104
(4) cold laser [MeSH Terms]	415
(5) low-energy laser [MeSH Terms]	297
(6) low-intensity laser [MeSH Terms]	306
(7) low-level laser [MeSH Terms]	1,453
(8) photobiomodulation [MeSH Terms]	0
(9) or/(1)-(8)	92,858
(10) lymphedema [MeSH Terms]	10,273
(11) lymphoedema [MeSH Terms]	10,273
(12) swelling [MeSH Terms]	38,980
(13) edema [MeSH Terms]	38,980
(14) oedema [MeSH Terms]	38,980
(15) or/(10)-(14)	48,771
(16) breast cancer [MeSH Terms]	243,481
(17) (9) and (15) and (16)	14

### **1.2. AMED via Ovid Interface (from inception to November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016)**

(1) laser.mp.	910
(2) laser therapy. mp.	308
(3) laser light. mp.	21
(4) cold laser. mp.	4
(5) low-energy laser. mp.	12
(6) low-intensity laser. mp.	22
(7) low-level laser. mp.	118

(8) photobiomodulation. mp.	2
(9) or/(1)-(8)	910
(10) lymphedema. mp.	275
(11) lymphoedema. mp.	116
(12) swelling. mp.	632
(13) edema. mp.	886
(14) oedema. mp.	331
(15) or/(10)-(14)	1,948
(16) breast cancer. mp.	1,317
(17) (9) and (15) and (16)	3

### 1.3. Web of Science (from inception to November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

(1) TS=(laser)	842,338
(2) TS=(laser therapy)	31,185
(3) TS=(laser light)	115,063
(4) TS=(cold laser)	7,961
(5) TS=(low-energy laser)	6,013
(6) TS=(low-intensity laser)	2,349
(7) TS=(low-level laser)	5,000
(8) TS=(photobiomodulation)	616
(9) or/(1)-(8)	842,489
(10) TS=(lymphedema)	6,413
(11) TS=(lymphoedema)	1,635
(12) TS=(swelling)	117,461
(13) TS=(edema)	87,437
(14) TS=(oedema)	101,352
(15) or/(10)-(14)	219,988
(16) TS=(breast cancer)	434,706

(17) (9) and (15) and (16) 59

**1.4. CNKI (from inception to November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016), search conducted in Chinese**

(1) 主题 (topic): 激光 (laser)	273,648
(2) 主题 (topic): 水肿 (edema)	121,080
(3) 主题 (topic): 乳腺癌 (breast cancer)	96,272
(4) (1) and (2) and (3)	10