

Systematic Review Evaluation Worksheet

How to use this worksheet

Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising a systematic review:

- Are the results of the review valid?
- What are the results?
- Will the results help locally?

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically. The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is “yes”, it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions.

1. Did the review address a clearly focused question?

HINT: An issue can be ‘focused’ in terms of the population studied, the intervention given, or the outcome considered.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Can't tell
- ☐ No

2. Did the authors look for the right type of papers?

HINT: ‘The best sort of studies’ would address the reviews question and have an appropriate study design.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Can't tell
- ☐ No

3. Do you think all the important, relevant studies were included?

HINT: Which bibliographic databases were used? Was there follow up from reference lists? Was there personal contact with experts? Did the authors search for unpublished as well as published studies? Did they search for non-English language studies?

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

4. Did the review's authors do enough to assess the quality of the included studies?

HINT: The authors need to consider the rigour of the studies they have identified. Lack of rigour may affect the studies' results.

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

5. If the results of the review have been combined, was it reasonable to do so?

HINT: Were the results similar from study to study? Are the results of all the included studies clearly displayed? Are the results of the different studies similar? Are the reasons for any variations in the results discussed?

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

6. What are the overall results of the review?

HINT: Are you are clear about the review's 'bottom line' results? What these are (numerically if appropriate)? How were the results expressed (NNT, odds ratio etc)?

7. How precise are the results?

HINT: Look at the confidence intervals, if given

8. Are the results be applicable to your research question?

HINT: Keep in mind that your local setting or research question is likely to differ from that of the review.

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

9. Were all important outcomes considered?

HINT: Is there other information you would like to have seen?

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

10. Are the benefits worth the harms and costs?

HINT: Even if this is not addressed by the review, what do you think?

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No



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