characteristics of available quality appraisal tools for assessing the quality of primary qualitative studies in qualitative evidence syntheses (QES). This presentation will also offer a critical discussion on the use of reflexivity as a de facto quality criterion, and how methodological reporting may influence the application of quality criteria in QES.

METHODS:

We conducted a systematic search to identify quality appraisal tools of qualitative research designed for use in QES. This search built upon the work of Santiago-Delefosse and colleagues by extending their search to 2016.

RESULTS:

We identified eight appraisal tools intended for use in the quality appraisal process of a QES. We provide a description of the structure, content, objectives, and philosophies of tools followed by considerations concerning their historical antecedents, common patterns regarding structure, content, and purpose, and the implications of these patterns on the QES process.

CONCLUSIONS:

Quality appraisal of qualitative research is an important step in QES, and there have been a proliferation of tools for this purpose. By providing an overview of available tools detailing their intent and strengths, this presentation will assist those engaging in QES to choose an appropriate tool for their work.

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OP120 Rapid Qualitative Reviews: A Scoping Review Of Guidance And Examples

AUTHORS:

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INTRODUCTION:

Decision-makers are increasingly recognizing the usefulness of qualitative research to inform patient-centered policy decisions, and are accordingly increasingly demanding qualitative evidence as part of health technology assessment (HTA). In the context of tight HTA timelines, a new form of evidence synthesis has emerged—rapid qualitative reviews. The need for rapidity requires either an increase in resources or, more commonly, a compromise in rigor, yet guidance on appropriate compromises for qualitative reviews is lacking.

METHODS:

In order to inform de novo guidance, we conducted a systematic scoping review to identify existing guidance and published examples of rapid qualitative reviews. We searched Medline and CINAHL using medical subject headings and keywords related to "rapid reviews" and "qualitative" research, and screened the 1,771 resultant citations independently in duplicate. Additionally, we searched the grey literature and solicited examples from our contacts and other evidence-synthesis organizations. We summarized included guidance and reviews using the Search, AppraisaL, Synthesis, Analysis (SALSA) framework to identify abbreviations in the review process.

RESULTS:

We found no guidance documents specific to rapid qualitative reviews. We found one published peer-reviewed rapid qualitative review, and several more (>10; grey literature search in process) through our organizational contacts. While methods to abbreviate the process are poorly reported, an abbreviated literature search (years and databases searched) and the use of a single reviewer appear common.

CONCLUSIONS:

A number of agencies are producing rapid qualitative reviews, however our review identifies the urgent need to develop and explore methods for the synthesis of qualitative research that balance rapidity and rigor.

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OP121 Experiences With Using The GRADE-CERQual Approach In Systematic Review

AUTHORS:

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INTRODUCTION:

There are many approaches to synthesis of qualitative studies. The GRADE-CERQual approach (Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative research)

provides a transparent method for assessing the confidence of evidence from reviews of qualitative research. This presentation aims at giving examples of applying CERQual, presenting and discussing its strengths and limitations.

METHODS:

This presentation draws on practical experiences with the conduction of three qualitative systematic reviews using the CERQual approach. The reviews differ in aim and field of research.

RESULTS:

The three CERQual reviews to be discussed in this presentation are: (i) Emergency departments and mental health patients - Purpose: Uncovering knowledge in a project on merging emergency departments to include both somatic and psychiatric patients. (ii) Parental responses to severe or lethal prenatal diagnosis – Purpose: Providing physicians with knowledge on a patient group from their daily clinical practice. (iii) Patients' experiences with home mechanical ventilation – Purpose: Disseminating important knowledge from a national project to an international audience.
CERQual strengths:

- Presents complex and large amount of knowledge in a clear way
- Pools knowledge from different studies into common outcome measures across studies
- Presents an assessment of the quality and strength of outcome measures
- The clear presentation makes it useful in decision making.

CERQual weaknesses:

- Time consuming to conduct the reviews
- Simplification of qualitative research, missing out on context and nuances.

CONCLUSIONS:

CERQual represents a useful tool to facilitate the use of qualitative evidence in clinical and political decision making. CERQual is time-consuming to learn, but a useful tool to apply when learned. CERQual may encourage more uniform reporting of qualitative research, including assessment of confidence in findings. This may increase the impact of systematic reviews of qualitative studies.

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OP122 Applications For Research Funding: How Many Peer Reviewers Do We Need?

AUTHORS:

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INTRODUCTION:

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is a major funder of health research in the United Kingdom. Selecting the most promising studies to fund is crucial, and external expert peer review is used to inform the funding boards. Our aim was to evaluate the influence of different kinds and numbers of peer review and reviewer scores on Board funding decisions, and how we might modify the process to reduce the workload for stakeholders.

METHODS:

Our mixed method study included i) retrospective cross sectional analysis of funding board and external reviewer scores for second stage applications for research funding, using Receiver Operator Characteristic (ROC) curves to quantify the influence of reviewer scores on funding decisions and ii) qualitative interviews with thirty stakeholders (funding board members, applicants, external peer reviewers and NIHR staff).

RESULTS:

Analysis of ROC area for reviewers indicated that areas changed very little with increasing numbers of reviewers from four to seven or more. External reviewers with clinical, methodological or patient expertise all appeared to influence Board funding decisions to a similar extent. The stakeholders interviewed valued peer review but felt it was important to develop a more proportionate process, to better balance its benefit with the workload of obtaining, preparing, reading and responding to reviews. Reviews are of most value when they fill gaps in expertise on the Board. Less than four reviews was felt to be insufficient but more than six, excessive. Workload could be reduced by making reviews more focused on the strengths and weaknesses of applications and identifying flaws which are potentially "fixable".