

Starting your knowledge synthesis

A practical guide for researchers new to evidence synthesis

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Do you have a broad review topic in mind ?

Yes!

No

Use design thinking approaches to identify a topic



Generating topics

- Brainstorming
- Concept mapping
- Problem statement



Prioritizing topics

- 2x2 matrix
- Dot voting

Conduct a preliminary search of your topic

A preliminary search is a brief search of databases in your topic area to check:

1. that your topic is NOT already the subject of a completed or in-progress review
2. that there is sufficient literature on your topic

Does a review on your topic already exist?

Yes

(go back to prioritizing topics)

No



Yay you get to do a review!

Decide between a systematic and scoping review

Note:
There are other
review types

Systematic review

Purpose

Seeks to systematically search for, appraise and synthesize research

Indication

Example

Determine effectiveness

Does early intervention increase gross motor function in kids with CP?

Analyze human experience

What are the experiences of kids with ASD during school transitions?

Assess measurement quality

What are the measurement properties of assessments on parent engagement in rehabilitation for kids?

Output

- Implications or recommendations for practice through critical appraisal
- Gaps in the literature
- Address conflicting results

Scoping review

Purpose

Aims to identify the nature and extent of research

Indication

Example

Identify the state of evidence in a given field

What types of KT products do allied health professionals use?

Clarify definitions or concepts

How is 'medical complexity' defined?

Examine methods used to conduct research on a specific topic

Which methods are used to research biofeedback?

Identify characteristics of an intervention, model, practice

What are the characteristics of infant care models?

Output

- Informs best practice. But, implications for practice can be more limited than those from a systematic review
- Gaps in the literature
- Rationale for systematic review

Focus the research question

Once you have scoped the literature and decided on the review type, frameworks can be used to focus the research question. Two commonly used frameworks are:

Framework Description

Review type

PICO(T)

Population (description of the group)
Intervention (intervention, therapy, practice)
Comparison (alternative to the intervention)
Outcome (goal of intervention)
Type of study or time factors

Systematic review

PCC

Population (description of the group)
Concept (intervention, phenomena, characteristic)
Context (care setting, location)

Scoping review



Next steps

This brings us to the end of 'starting' your knowledge synthesis

The next steps are to:

1

Use the PRISMA guide to create a protocol for your:

- Systematic review (**PRISMA-SR**) or
- Scoping review (**PRISMA-ScR**)

2

Refer to a trusted manual for your:

- Systematic review guided by **Cochrane** or
- Scoping review guided by **Joanna Briggs** or by **Colquhoun et al.** (2014).

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