

1. APPROACH TO REVIEWING²

Is the synthesis a priori or iterative in method and aiming to aggregate 'facts' or create a new interpretations of ways of understanding? Are the data numbers or words?

Nature of data and analysis in the review predominantly:

- i) A priori specified method of review or iterative approach (for e.g review question, bases for assessment of quality of studies, and/or framework for synthesis emerging during the review)
- ii) Numerical or narrative data
- iii) 'Empirical' or 'conceptual' data
- iv) Relatively homogeneous or heterogeneous data
- v) Numerical or narrative analysis of data in synthesis
- vi) Meta empirical or meta conceptual synthesis of data or both^{2, 3}

2. EXAMPLES OF APPROACHES TO REVIEWING

Statistical meta analysis

- Review question?
- **A priori** or iterative procedures of review
- **Numerical** or narrative data
- 'Empirical' or 'conceptual' data
- **Most concepts pre-specified** or most concepts emergent
- **Relatively homogeneous** or heterogeneous data
- **Numerical**, narrative analysis or quantification of qualitative data in synthesis
- **Meta empirical** or meta conceptual synthesis of data

Meta ethnography

- Review question?
- A priori or **iterative procedures** of review
- Numerical or **narrative data**
- 'Empirical' or 'conceptual' data
- Most concepts pre-specified or **most concepts emergent**
- **Relatively homogeneous** or heterogeneous data
- Numerical, **narrative analysis** or quantification of qualitative data in synthesis
- Meta empirical or **meta conceptual synthesis of data**

REFERENCES

1. Gough D (2007) Dimensions of difference in evidence reviews (Overview; I. Questions, evidence and methods; II..Breadth and depth; III. Methodological approaches; IV. Quality and relevance appraisal; V. Communication, interpretation and application. Series of six posters presented at National Centre for Research Methods meeting, Manchester, January 2007. London: EPPI-Centre.
2. Gough D (In press) Weight of evidence : a framework for the appraisal of the quality and relevance of evidence In J. Furlong, A. Oancea (Eds.) Applied and Practice-based Research. Special Edition of Research Papers in Education, Summer 2007.
3. Harden A, Thomas J (2005) Methodological issues in combining diverse study types in systematic reviews. International Journal of Social Research Methods 8:257-271