



COCHRANE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS GROUP

Ways of extracting qualitative evidence



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Extraction



- Seeks to enhance a Cochrane review where qualitative evidence is identified:
 - whilst searching RCTs, or
 - by including qualitative terms in the search string related to outcomes of interest to the review question

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Background

- Method of data extraction can profoundly effect review findings
- Extraction of quantitative data is relatively linear
- Extraction of qualitative data may be more iterative (depending on ones approach)

Principals for consideration

- Extent of data extraction:
 - Data (themes, metaphors, concepts) relevant to the review question are extracted if they can be supported by a quote from a participant,
 - All relevant qualitative data identified in primary studies is extracted, regardless of whether supported by a quote from a participant



Principals for consideration

Approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
Selective extraction	May be useful where large volumes of data &/or clear quotes	May be difficult to explain or justify during write-up if limited supporting quotes
Inclusive extraction	More comprehensive	More resource intensive



Principals for consideration



Approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
Selective extraction (Bates & Coren, 2006)	mapping, identifying gaps, defining the review question	Synthesis not possible or limited
Inclusive extraction (Briggs et al, 2007; Munro et al, 2007)	Facilitates more detailed analysis and synthesis	More resource intensive

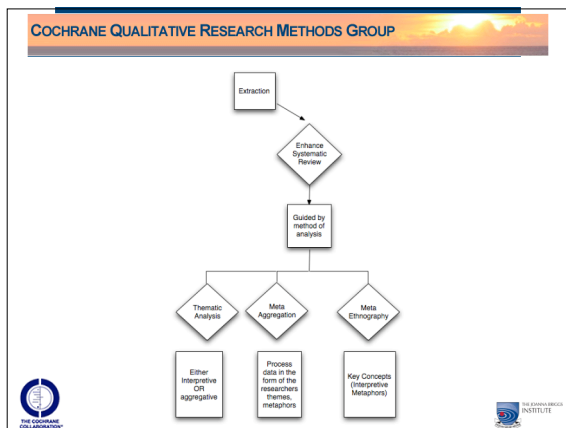


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Principals for consideration

	Informing Question development	Enhancing reviews
Type of synthesis:	Descriptive / scoping; aggregative; or interpretive	Aggregative or Interpretative
Data extraction informed by:	Narrative, count data, coding	Meta aggregation, Thematic Analysis, Meta Ethnography








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Extraction: Thematic analysis

- Draws on the methods of either aggregative or interpretive approaches.
- Lack of clarity regarding whether a particular approach is optimal for particular **questions**
- Current strategies seem to rely upon the **purpose** of including qualitative evidence
 - Description or theory generation

Extraction: Meta aggregation

- Often involves discussion to establish consensus on approach and format of extraction
- Involves the extraction of themes, metaphors or conclusions (findings of the research author)



Extraction: Meta ethnography

- Extraction and synthesis are not linear, so difficult to separate.
 - Repeated reading of studies & recording concepts that arise from the reading



Challenges within the data extraction process

- Distinguishing qualitative and quantitative data in mixed method studies
- Distinguishing first from second order interpretations
- Distinguishing first and second order interpretations from conjecture
- Ensuring that the data extracted addresses the key questions of the stakeholders



Conclusions

- Important to choose a data extraction approach that is appropriate to the review question, the type of review (inform etc.) and the available evidence, existing frameworks, and method of analysis.
- Regardless of the data extraction approach used, the process needs to be systematic and transparent and needs to be described in detail → an 'audit trail'