



A preliminary analysis of the reporting of qualitative research in high impact health sciences journals

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Overview

- Cochrane Qualitative Methods Group
- Why we are interested
- Aim of the study
- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Where are we now?



Cochrane Qualitative Research Methods Group

Central concerns:

- Increase awareness of the role of qualitative evidence in systematic reviews
- The development of strategies for systematically reviewing qualitative evidence
- Training of reviewers in qualitative meta-synthesis



Why we are interested

- There is value in qualitative research but qualitative research papers appear to be underrepresented in mainstream journals.



Aim of the study

- Identify the proportional representation of qualitative reports in a sample of high impact journals (phase 1)
- Establish the degree to which the editorial policy on publishing qualitative research of the journals sampled facilitates/encourages the submission of such papers (phase 2)



Phase 1 – Journal Analysis

- 39 journals from America, Europe and Australia
- Discipline subsets

– Medicine	9
– Nursing	12
– Rehab, OT, Physiotherapy	10
– Social work	8
- Instructions to authors – applicability towards qualitative papers



Journals sampled

- AJAN
- Am J of Com Psych
- Am J of Sports Med
- Annals of Internal Med
- Archives of Phys Med and Rehab
- Archives of Internal Med
- Br J of Social Work
- Br Med Bulletin
- BMJ
- Cancer Nurs
- Collegian
- Contemp nurs
- Family Relations
- Gait and posture
- INP
- Int J Nurs Studies
- JAN
- Journal of App Phys
- Journal of Clin Nurs
- Journal of Electromyography and Kinesiology
- Journal of Motor behavior
- Journal of Professional Nursing
- Journal of Rehab Med
- Journal of Social Policy
- Journal of Social Work Education
- JAMA
- Lancet
- Netherlands Journal of Medicine
- New Eng J Med
- Nurs Res
- Pediatr Exere Sci
- Research in Nursing and Health
- Scan J Med & Sc Sports
- Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences
- Social Service Review
- Social Work
- Social work Research
- Sports Medicine

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Results so far

- Number of volumes and issue per year varied
- Average pages per volume = 895
- Average pages per issue = 108

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Results so far cont.

Average # research articles/volume by Country

Methods	USA Average	UK / Europe Average	AUS Average
total qual per volume	6	5	5
total quant per volume	17	15	16
total mixed per volume	0	0	0

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Results so far cont.

Average # of quantitative articles/volume by Discipline

Discipline	Percentage
Medicine	42%
Nursing	9%
Rehab / OT	42%
Social Work	7%

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Results so far cont.

Average percentage qualitative articles/volume by Discipline

Discipline	Percentage
Medicine	70%
Nursing	18%
Rehab / OT	10%
Social Work	2%

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Results so far cont.

Average percentage of qualitative methodologies reported per issue

Methodology	Percentage
Phenomenology	11%
Grounded theory	17%
Ethnography	14%
Action research	6%
Discourse	48%
Not specific	3%
Other	1%

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Instructions to authors

- 34 out of the 39 journals had accessible instructions to authors
- Only 3 journals had a separate section for authors submitting qualitative papers: The British Medical Journal; the Journal of Clinical Nursing; and the Journal of Advanced Nursing
- 21 Journals provided instructions that were broad enough to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative research reports
- The remaining 10 journals that didn't explicitly or implicitly accommodate qualitative papers were:



Instruction to authors cont.

- American Journal of Sports Medicine
- Annals of Internal Medicine
- Archives of Internal Medicine
- Journal of Electromyography and Kinesiology
- Journal of the Medical American Association
- Lancet
- Family Relations
- Journal of Community Psychology
- New England Journal of Medicine
- Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences



Instruction to authors cont.

- **Abstract** – 32 journals
- **Research question** – 3 journals
- **Methodology** – 5 journals
- **Methods** – 19 journals
- **Results** - 21 journals
- **Conclusion** – 21 journals



Phase 2 – Editorial survey

- Has your journal considered publishing qualitative research?
- What types of qualitative research are you willing to consider?



Phase 2 – Results so far

- Only one-third have so far responded
- All 13 responders consider qualitative research papers
- The detail in many responses suggests an interest in and experience with such work



Where to now?

- Encourage response to Editorial survey
- Complete data analysis for phase 1 and phase 2

Issues raised

- How do we try to increase awareness?

