Different methods for doing a literature review - how useful are they?

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THE ORIGINAL SYSTEMATIC REVIEW; OR SYSTEMATIC REVIEW WITH META-ANALYSIS
COMPREHENSIVE SEARCHING; QUALITY APPRAISAL, STATISTICAL ANALYSIS (META ANALYSIS)
### SAMPLE OF APPROACHES TO DOING A LITERATURE REVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Meta-aggregation</td>
<td>Hannes and Lockwood (2011)</td>
<td>Comprehensive search, appraisal and aggregation of findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meta-ethnography</td>
<td>Noblit and Hare (1988)</td>
<td>Purposive search, appraisal &amp; interpretation of findings. 1st, 2nd and 3rd order interpretations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meta-synthesis</td>
<td>Walsh and Downe (2005)</td>
<td>Comprehensive search, appraisal &amp; interpretation of findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrative review</td>
<td>Whitemore and Knafl (2005)</td>
<td>Comprehensive search, appraisal &amp; interpretation of findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meta-analysis</td>
<td>Higgins and Green (2011)</td>
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VARIED USE OF TERMINOLOGY


- Emphasis Noblit and Hare’s ethnography, rather than meta-synthesis including purposeful selection of studies


- Refers to Hannes and Lockwood’s meta aggregation & lines of action.
REVIEW OF METHODS USED IN THE NURSING LITERATURE

Method: We undertook a form of review called a Focused Mapping Review and Synthesis described by Bradbury-Jones and colleagues.

We reviewed the top six nursing journals from January 2017-April 2018.

Inclusion criteria: any paper with ‘review’ in the title.

We reviewed the papers for stated method used, search strategy, critical appraisal, method of analysis.
RESULTS

- We found 35 named approaches to doing a literature review.

- Most common: systematic review (but this did not refer to SR with meta-analysis) and integrative review

- Other methods: critical literature review, qualitative evidence synthesis, umbrella systematic review, critical synthesis, meta-narrative review, mixed method review, narrative review, scoping review, realist review, meta aggregation, theoretical review, systematic review of qualitative and quantitative methods, overview of systematic review, meta synthesis
We found 35 named approaches to doing a literature review.

Not consistently indexed in journals.

For example, one journal has two sections:

- Literature review
- Systematic review

Integrative reviews were found in both sections in the same edition.
SEARCHING

• All aimed for comprehensive searching using databases and PRISMA frequently used but not all did additional searches such as reference list searches.

• No evidence of sampling
All reviewers undertook critical appraisal

This referred to relevance and/or quality

Some used this as an inclusion criteria and pre-set quality standards but most did not.

Most reviewers undertook an inclusive approach.

The purpose of appraisal not always clear
DATA ANALYSIS

- Different terms used for analysis - narrative, content, thematic.
- Often not explained
- For example in a SR where meta-analysis was possible but not undertaken, lack of clarity on how to proceed.
COMMON STRUCTURE OF ALL SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

- Research question
- Searching- comprehensive or expansive
- Critical appraisal
- Data analysis
- Writing up
IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS AND STUDENTS

• Researchers and MSc/PhD students need to engage with the ongoing debate about different methods
• Adhere to a specific method and use the original source
• Comprehensive searching is more than database searching
• Appraisal needs to have a purpose
• Approach to analysis needs to be clearly stated
REFERENCES

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Walsh D and Downe S (2005) Meta-synthesis method for qualitative research: a literature review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 50(2) 204-211