

Literature review

Rural mothers caring for children with chronic health conditions

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AIM

This Integrative literature review identified and examined the literature on: The rural mothers' experiences in caring for a child with a chronic health condition.

BACKGROUND

Families living with a child who has a chronic health condition experience many challenges; these are often amplified for families living in rural areas, where issues such as the distance from services adds further challenges the family must manage. Like many children, rural children with chronic health conditions are primarily cared for by their mothers. The additional strain of geography creates its own unique experiences for mothers who need to access the high-quality care that their child requires

METHODS

A systematic, integrative review was used to identify what is already known about the topic and synthesise this through interpretive translation into identified themes.

This approach is outlined below in Figure 1: Prisma Diagram using the approach outlined by Whitemore and Knafel (2005), and guided by the Equator PRISMA framework

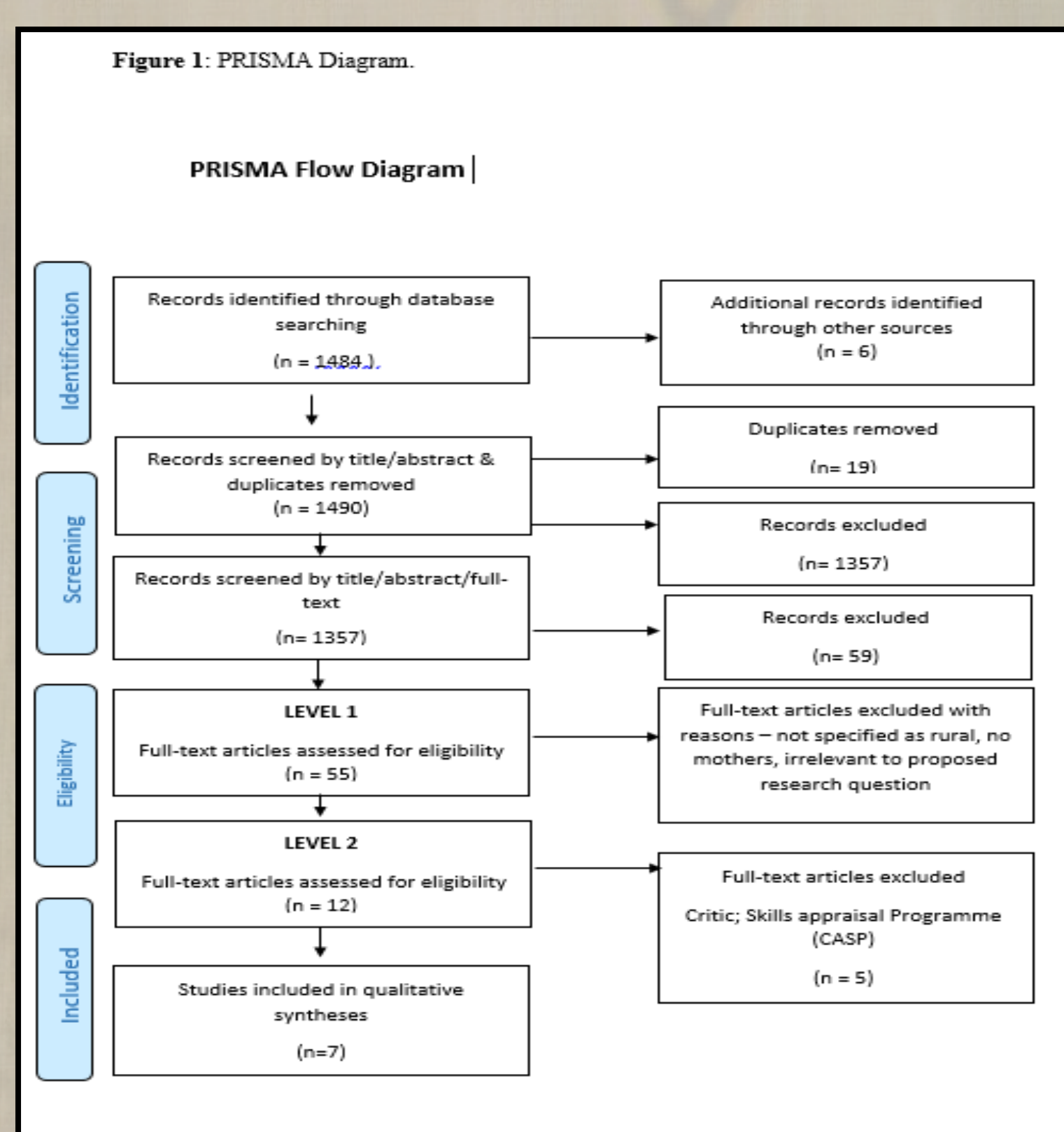


Figure 1: Prisma Diagram

Inclusion criteria for the research-based studies included:

- Published between 2005–2016
- Peer-reviewed and written in English.
- Relevant to nursing and family research and practice
- Related to the experiences of mothers
- Children with chronic conditions
- Mothers who lived in a defined rural area

Resulting in:

- 1484 studies were identified
- An additional six studies found through snowballing
- Seven studies met the inclusion criteria

Reference:

Whitemore, R., & Knafel, K. (2005). The integrative review: Updated methodology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 52(5), 546–553. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2005.03621.x



RESULTS

Data from the seven articles was analysed and the mothers' experiences were synthesised into five themes: 'struggling for resources', 'barriers in accessing services', 'strain of decision-making', 'mother's physical and emotional breakdown' and 'the daily management of family activities'.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that mothers from rural areas face additional barriers related to their rurality, including transportation difficulties, socioeconomic status and social isolation, and are challenged by limited access to specialty medical services, educators and allied health professionals. The literature review outcome will assist in informing nursing practice through identifying and allocating resources to reduce these barriers rural mother experience will assist in enabling the child to reach their full developmental potential.

SIGNIFICANCE

This review identified a need for health professionals to understand the challenges and barriers rural mothers face in accessing services and to assist in developing future models of care, services and resources to optimise health outcomes and access for rural children with chronic conditions. In developing new models of care and resources nurse require insights through evidence of the current care delivery for rural children with chronic health conditions in order to develop innovative ways of improving care delivery. Reducing the health care inequity and accessibility to services issues will help to overcome rural disadvantage.

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