



THE JOANNA BRIGGS INSTITUTE
Better evidence. Better outcomes.

Confidence in qualitative synthesis findings: The ConQual Approach

SR@PU

Anna Lloyd

May 2018

**HEALTH
PROFESSIONS
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**

NHS **70**
YEARS
OF THE NHS
1948 - 2018
Royal Devon and Exeter
NHS Foundation Trust

Aims of session

- To introduce ConQual as a method for establishing confidence in qualitative synthesis findings
- To illustrate the use of ConQual using data
- To stimulate discussion about the ConQual approach



THE JOANNA BRIGGS INSTITUTE
Better evidence. Better outcomes.

HEALTH
PROFESSIONS
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

Starting point...

- Group
- Knowledge

JBI – Joanna Briggs institute (University of Adelaide)

- Aims to provide high quality evidence to healthcare providers to inform clinical or policy decision making
- International, not-for-profit organisation; Almost 80 centres of excellence around the world, including Plymouth University

Meta-aggregative approach - a methodology for qualitative synthesis and levels of evidence.

- Established early 2000s; aligned with pragmatism
- Aims to deliver readily useable synthesised findings to inform healthcare decision making
- Underlying premise - Regardless of type of evidence being synthesised, all SRs should be conducted in the same way (Munn et al, 2014)



THE JOANNA BRIGGS INSTITUTE
Better evidence. Better outcomes.

Summary of Findings table and ConQual

The ConQual approach – What & Why?

Munn *et al.* *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 2014, **14**:108
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2288/14/108>



TECHNICAL ADVANCE

Open Access

Establishing confidence in the output of qualitative research synthesis: the ConQual approach

Zachary Munn*, Kylie Porritt, Craig Lockwood, Edoardo Aromataris and Alan Pearson

The ConQual Approach – How?

- Systematic method
- Put simply: Need to consider what increases or decreases our confidence in the results of qualitative studies

Synthesised Finding example:

What information will increase or decrease your confidence in the results?

Synthesised Finding: Person-centered goal setting is possible but often does not occur

- Type of research
- Dependability
- Credibility

Summary of findings table template

Systematic review title:

Population:

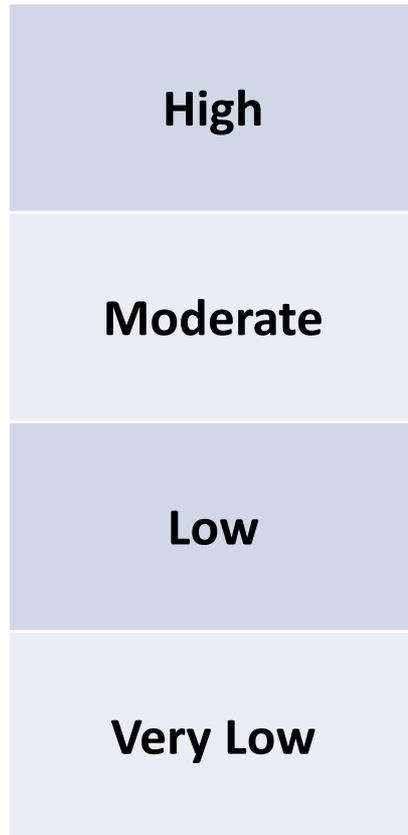
Phenomena of interest:

Context:

Synthesised Finding	Type of research	Dependability	Credibility	ConQual	Comments



Type of research



Pre-ranking of papers:

High – qualitative studies

Low – expert opinion



Dependability

JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Qualitative Research

Reviewer _____ Date _____

Author _____ Year _____ Record Number _____

Yes No Unclear Not applicable

- 1. Is there congruity between the stated philosophical perspective and the research methodology? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 2. Is there congruity between the research methodology and the research question or objectives? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 3. Is there congruity between the research methodology and the methods used to collect data? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 4. Is there congruity between the research methodology and the representation and analysis of data? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 5. Is there congruity between the research methodology and the interpretation of results? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 6. Is there a statement locating the researcher culturally or theoretically? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 7. Is the influence of the researcher on the research, and vice-versa, addressed? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 8. Are participants, and their voices, adequately represented? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 9. Is the research ethical according to current criteria or, for recent studies, and is there evidence of ethical approval by an appropriate body? Yes No Unclear Not applicable
- 10. Do the conclusions drawn in the research report flow from the analysis, or interpretation, of the data? Yes No Unclear Not applicable



Dependability Questions: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7.

Overall appraisal: Include Exclude Seek further info

Comments (Including reason for exclusion)

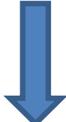
Dependability

This is measured by asking questions related to the appropriateness of the conduct of the research with research aims and purpose:

2	Is there congruity between the research methodology and the research question or objectives?
3	Is there congruity between the research methodology and the methods used to collect data?
4	Is there congruity between the research methodology and the representation and analysis of data?
6	Is there a statement locating the researcher culturally or theoretically?
7	Is the influence of the researcher on the research, and vice-versa, addressed?

- Ranking system:

 4-5 'yes' responses, the paper remains unchanged

 2-3 'yes' responses: move down 1 level

 0-1 'yes' responses: move down 2 levels

Credibility

This is measured by assigning a level of credibility to the synthesised finding:

Unequivocal (U)	Findings that relate to evidence beyond reasonable doubt; may include findings that are matter of fact, directly reported and not open to challenge.
Credible (C)	Findings that are, albeit interpretations, plausible in the light of data and theoretical framework. They can be logically inferred from data. As interpretative they can be challenged.
Not Supported (NS)	Findings that are not supported by the data.

Ranking system for findings:



All unequivocal – remains unchanged



Mix of unequivocal / credible – downgraded one (-1)



All credible – downgraded two (-2)



Mix of credible / not supported – downgraded three (-3)



All not supported – downgraded four (-4)

Illustration with data

Systematic review title: Experiences of stroke survivors, their families and unpaid carers in goal setting within stroke rehabilitation

Population: Adults (over 18 years) who had experienced a stroke and undergone rehabilitation, and their families and unpaid carers.

Phenomena of interest: Experiences of goal setting

Context: Stroke rehabilitation in acute and community hospitals, inpatient rehabilitation units and the community

Synthesised Finding	Type of research	Dependability	Credibility	ConQual	Comments
Person-centered goal setting is possible but often does not occur	Qualitative	At least 1 article only 'yes' for 0-1 dependability Qs so downgrade 2 levels (-2)	Mix of unequivocal / credible so downgrade 1 level (-1)	Very Low	Give reasoning in footnotes
	HIGH	LOW	VERY LOW		

Summary of Findings

Experiences of stroke survivors, their families and unpaid carers in goal setting within stroke rehabilitation

Bibliography: Lloyd A, Bannigan K, Sugavanam T, Freeman J. Experiences of stroke survivors, their families and unpaid carers in goal setting within stroke rehabilitation: a systematic review of qualitative evidence. JBI Database System Rev Implement Rep 2018; ?(?);??-??

Synthesized finding	Type of research	Dependability	Credibility	ConQual score
Person-centered goal setting is possible but often does not occur	Qualitative	Downgrade 2 levels [†]	Downgrade 1 level [‡]	Very Low
Practitioners shape the context of goal setting	Qualitative	Downgrade 2 levels [†]	Downgrade 1 level [‡]	Very Low
Practitioners need to listen to the person and know "who they are" – there is a need for an individualized approach to goal setting	Qualitative	Downgrade 2 levels [†]	Downgrade 1 level [‡]	Very Low
Recovery after stroke is ongoing and unpredictable	Qualitative	Downgrade 2 levels [†]	Downgrade 1 level [‡]	Very Low

[†] Downgraded two levels due to the dependability of primary studies (all studies had either no statement locating the researcher or this was unclear, two studies had unclear acknowledgement of their influence on the research findings, and for two studies the congruity between research methodology, methods and / or data analysis was uncertain).

[‡] Downgraded one level due to a mix of unequivocal and credible findings.

JBI Grades of Recommendation

JBI Grades of Recommendation

Grade A

A **'strong' recommendation** for a certain health management strategy where it is clear that desirable benefits outweigh undesirable benefits of the strategy; where there is evidence of sufficient quality supporting its use; there is a benefit or no impact on resource use, and values, preferences and the patient experience have been taken into account.

Grade B

A **'weak' recommendation** for a certain health management strategy where desirable benefits appear to outweigh undesirable benefits of the strategy, although this is not as clear; where there is evidence supporting its use, although this may not be of high quality; there is a benefit, no impact or minimal impact on resource use, and values, preferences and the patient experience may or may not have been taken into account.

JBI Grades of Recommendation: Example

- Individual practitioners and providers of inpatient stroke rehabilitation services should reflect upon and evaluate the impact they have on goal setting interactions. They should endeavor to positively encourage and empower the stroke survivor. They should get to know the person, listening to them and finding out “who they are”, in order to develop meaningful goals (together) that are individualized to the stroke survivor (**Grade B recommendation**).
- Practitioners should recognize that recovery after stroke is ongoing and unpredictable and be aware of the potential importance to stroke survivors of maintaining hope and a sense of forward momentum through the use of person-centered goal setting in stroke rehabilitation (**Grade B recommendation**).
- Practitioners should use person-centered goal setting processes in stroke rehabilitation that acknowledge and adapt to a stroke survivor’s ability and desire to be involved in goal setting (**Grade B recommendation**).



Discussion/ what do you think?

- Pros/ cons of ConQual approach?
- Might you exclude a study at the critical appraisal stage if scoring very low? Why, or why not? If so, how would you set a 'cut off'?

Summary & conclusions

- ConQual provides a tool to establish confidence in the evidence produced from a qualitative SR.
- May improve usefulness of findings, allowing recommendations for practice to be made and serving as a practical tool to assist decision making in healthcare.
- Important to be aware of ConQual & the SoF table BEFORE conducting review, and consider strengths and limitations of the approach.