Reviews of the Research/Literature

Lourdes University
Center for Nursing Scholarship

There are four methods for combining results of research studies for application to nursing practice:

1. **Systematic Review** – *A highly structured and controlled search of the available literature that minimizes the potential for bias and produces a practice recommendation as an outcome* (Houser, 2012, p. 499).
   a. Primarily experimental research
   b. Unbiased, exhaustive review
   c. Required sequence of steps *
      i. Determine the background for the review – identify the need
      ii. State the main review question
      iii. Develop inclusion and exclusion criteria – patients, diagnoses, interventions outcomes
      iv. Devise a search strategy - journals, texts, conference proceedings, databases
      v. Develop study selection criteria- search terms, types of studies, time frame?
      vi. Determine study quality criteria- how will the literature be appraised?
          What evaluation /appraisal tools will be used to assess the quality of the evidence?
   d. Reviewer maintains a record (Matrix) of each abstract and article reviewed
   e. Reviewer Indicates why a studies were dropped from the review and why studies were selected for the review – this minimizes bias
   f. The findings from the review should link to recommendations for practice

**Systematic review article examples**


Data base of existing systematic reviews of health care interventions [www.cochrane.org](http://www.cochrane.org)
2. **Integrative Review** – a methodology that synthesizes quantitative, theoretical, and qualitative research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the human condition.
   a. Broader than systematic
   b. Contains both qualitative and quantitative research; use of convenience samples
   c. Same steps as systematic* however qualitative reviews are evaluated using tools to assess trustworthiness; quantitative reviews are evaluated using tools to assess internal and external validity, etc.
   d. May result in a practice guideline that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative research.

**Integrative review article example**

3. **Meta-analysis** - aggregates the results of quantitative studies.
   a. Can be complicated
   b. Need sufficient numbers of studies with similar populations, measures and statistics
   c. Describes overall typical responses of the intervention of the population of interest
   d. Provide a basis for judging overall effect size of multiple studies

**Meta-analysis article example**
4. **Meta-synthesis** – *identification of overarching themes from the combination of qualitative studies*
   a. Use of multiple qualitative studies to enhance trustworthiness and generalizability
   b. Requires rigorous analysis
   c. Steps
      i. Formulate a clear research problem and question – needs to be focused enough to guide the review of the literature.
      ii. Conduct a comprehensive search of the qualitative literature; consider appropriate data bases and inclusion and exclusion criteria
      iii. Conduct appraisal of the studies – determine means to locate information for the syntheses
      iv. Select and conduct metasynthesis techniques to integrate and analyze qualitative research findings. How will the literature be appraised and how are the studies related?
      v. Present synthesis of findings – what are the key concepts or themes represented across all the studies
      vi. Reflect on the process- consider credibility and trustworthiness of the studies, discussion of limitations, generalizability
   d. Tables are helpful

**Metasynthesis article example**


**Information for Reviews of the Research/Literature outline adapted from:**


**Example articles are located and available at the Center for Nursing Scholarship**