



Introduction to qualitative evidence syntheses –
what are they and why and when are they useful
within Cochrane?

Prof Jane Noyes

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Welcome

Resources

Training Resources

Contacting convenors



Cochrane Qualitative & Implementation Methods Group

Our focus is on methods and processes involved in the synthesis of qualitative evidence and the integration of qualitative evidence with Cochrane intervention reviews of effects. Our purpose is to advise Cochrane and its network of people on policy and practice and qualitative evidence synthesis, develop and maintain methodological guidance, and provide training to those undertaking Cochrane reviews. From 2012 our mandate has been extended to include methods for undertaking systematic reviews of implementation.

Click [here](#) for a Canadian Cochrane Center YouTube Tutorial on Qualitative Evidence Synthesis from our lead convenor Professor Jane Noyes.

Click [here](#) for a Seminar on the CERQUAL Tool - a new approach to qualitative evidence syntheses analysis from our lead convenor Professor Jane Noyes..

Current news from Cochrane

- ◆ [Coming to Vienna? Join in the Project Transform activities](#)
- ◆ [Designing a successful questionnaire: webinars from Cochrane Training](#)
- ◆ [Cochrane widens its language scope to Catalan](#)
- ◆ [Establishment of the European satellite of the Cochrane Public Health Review Group](#)
- ◆ [Match funding to support Cochrane's 'Podcasts for Parents' project - 9 September](#)

[more](#)

New Methodology Articles

What is qualitative research?

- “explores people’s subjective understandings of their everyday lives.....
- involves the application of logical, planned and thorough methods of collecting data, and careful, thoughtful and, above all, rigorous analysis.”

Source: C Pope & N Mays (2006) *Qualitative research in health care* (p6-9)

Qualitative method of data collection and analysis

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Methods of collecting qualitative data

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Observations
- Written material

- Other approaches!

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(Some) Methodologies/Methods for analysing qualitative research

- Thematic analysis
- Interpretative phenomenology
- Grounded Theory
- Ethnography
- Discourse analysis
- Conversation analysis
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Epistemological and ontological differences

Quantitative	Qualitative
Positivist	Interpretative/ constructionist
Numeric data	Textual data
Truth is singular, “out there” and objective	Truths are social constructs and can be multiple
Deductive	Inductive
Good research removes bias	It’s all about perspective. Phenomena are best understood in their context
Controlled settings	Naturalistic settings
Knowledge is reality	Knowledge is interpretation

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Qualitative inquiry can ask:

- what do people think about having this condition?
- what's their experience of receiving the intervention?
- what is it about this intervention that works?
- for whom does it work?
- under what circumstances does it work?
- why does that matter?
- will it work around here?
- what's the best way to implement it?
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Qualitative inquiry can also ask:

- What are the policy and practice concerns of the intervention (before or alongside questions of effectiveness)?
- What is the nature of problem before we start to plan intervention?
- Which ingredient of the intervention works best? And why it works?
- What happened when implemented?

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Why synthesise qualitative research?

- Strategic
- Less wasteful
- Create more powerful explanations, higher order conceptualisation
- Broader, more encompassing theories (more transferable)
- Belief that it “will yield truths that are better, more socially relevant, or more complete” (Paterson et al, 2001)
- Enhance transferability of findings (potential)
- “invokes some degree of conceptual innovation of the parts as a means of creating the whole” (Strike & Posner, cited by Noblit and Hare)

Conducting a QES in Cochrane

- Must be linked with one or more Cochrane intervention reviews
- The imperative for adding a QES must be a priority (or to produce an exemplar)
- The quan/qual review teams can work separately or together
- A QES can be added to a published intervention review – but the teams must be able to work together to integrate the quan and qual findings at the end in an overarching synthesis.

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Registering a QES Protocol in Cochrane

- Cochrane Qualitative and Implementation Methods Group have guidance – see <http://methods.cochrane.org/qi/registering-titles-and-developing-protocols>
- Checks the critical success factors for completion
- Team composition and working arrangements
- Researchable question
- Asks for a scoping search to establish the type and nature of question before selecting a method

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