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# Exploring search strategies for identifying barriers to and facilitators of programme delivery

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## Overview of presentation

- How can we most effectively search the literature for qualitative research regarding complex public health interventions?
- The example review (barriers & facilitators to implementing CVD prevention programmes):
  - context
  - search strategy & results
  - what were the strengths & weaknesses of the different strategies?
- Where next?



## Limitations of protocol-driven search strategies?

- Greater 'yield'/hour: talking to colleagues, browsing, and pursuing 'interesting' refs (Greenhalgh & Peacock, 2005)
- For qualitative research: price of high recall is poor precision (Shaw et al, 2004)
- Dependent upon database-specific qualitative filters (Wilczynki et al, 2007)



## Review background

- Commissioned review – scope developed with public stakeholders
- Intended to complement effectiveness and cost-effectiveness reviews on same topic
- Tight time frame (20 weeks)



## Search methods used

Source of included studies	Total included in final report	Percentage of included studies	Total citations in search strategy
Protocol-driven search strategy in 6 databases	<b>20</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>2866</b>
Targeted Searches	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1338</b>
Author Suggestion (primary research)	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>
Reference Checking	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Citation Checking	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>n/a</b>



## Protocol driven search strategy

- PICO style search strategy combined with a qualitative filter in 6 databases
- 20 papers included
- Necessary starting point
- Which qualitative filter?
- Inconsistent/no indexing
- Less standardised reporting



## Targeted searches

- Named programmes searched for in title/abstract
- 5 papers included
- Programme names came from:
  - a) parallel clinical effectiveness review
  - b) qualitative protocol searches
  - c) stakeholder consultation



## Author suggestions

- 23 authors contacted, 13 papers suggested
- 1 of these papers was included, but very poor quality (e.g. did not report sample size!)
- Resource-intensive process (finding, contacting, following-up)
- Did not identify high quality studies



## Reference Checking

- Relevant reviews identified via electronic database searches
- Reference lists checked for further primary research
- 3 papers identified for inclusion
- Identified grey literature & 'less rigorous' studies conducted in disadvantaged communities



## Reflections

- Methodological weaknesses of included studies reflected nature of qualitative research conducted in the CVD field
- Inconsistent indexing of qualitative studies
- Qualitative filters in need of further development
- Qualitative research buried within evaluations
- How can expertise be drawn upon to identify grey literature without draining reviewer resources?
- Would an iterative approach to searching allow the development of more useful concepts?



## Conclusions

- Protocol-driven search strategy a necessary starting point, but not sufficient by itself
- Other search strategies can be useful, but be aware of the resources required
- Experiment with search strategies, reflect, and share what is learnt with Information Scientist and researcher communities



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