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Submitter Information

Vivian Welch
Email: vivian.welch@uottawa.ca

Abstract Information

Abstract Title:

When and how are effects on health equity assessed in systematic reviews of effectiveness.

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Evidence for social welfare, evidence for education, evidence for crime and justice.

Authors:

Vivian Welch. MSc, PhD (Candidate). Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa. Peter Tugwell. MD, MSc. Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa. Mark Petticrew. BA, PhD. London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. Jessie McGowan. BMus, MLIS. Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa. Erin Ueffing. BHSc (Hons), MHSc. Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa. Maria Benkhalti. BSc (Hons), MSc (Candidate). Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa. Elizabeth Kristjansson. BA (Hons), MA, PhD. Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa. George Wells. MSc, PhD. University of Ottawa.

Abstract:

Background: There is increasing interest in whether systematic reviews can contribute to the evidence-base on promoting health equity. Objectives: To systematically review methods used to assess effects on health equity in cohorts of systematic reviews of effectiveness. Methods: We searched MEDLINE (1950-Jan 2008), PsychINFO, the Cochrane Methodology Register (Issue 1, 2008), CINAHL (1982 to April 20, 2008), SCOPUS, and handsearched the Campbell Collaboration presentations of 2007 and the citations of included studies. We included methodology reports that assessed one or more factors related to health equity in a cohort of systematic reviews. Risk of bias was appraised for selection, attrition and detection bias, using pre-determined questions. Data were extracted using a pre-tested form. Results: We included eight studies; six of which were based on groups of Cochrane reviews. Three methodological approaches to assessing effects on health equity were identified: 1) descriptive assessment of reporting and analysis in systematic reviews; 2) descriptive assessment of reporting and analysis in primary studies; and 3) analytic approaches. Data on sociodemographic factors were lacking for all three approaches. Cochrane reviews were disproportionately represented in the included studies. Conclusions: There is need for methodological guidance, based on empiric evidence, on how and when to assess effects on health equity in systematic reviews.
