Making research more reliable using lessons from systematic reviews

Half-day Training Workshop

Wednesday, 24th August 2016, at 1 pm to 4 pm – **Sign up on registration form**

Presenters

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Summary

Systematic reviews (SRs) are recognised the 'gold standards' in evidence synthesis, but are not always feasible or appropriate. Where SR is not undertaken for valid reasons, reviewers can still improve their syntheses' reliability by adhering to key lessons from SRs and other forms of evidence review. In particular, transparency, objectivity, and repeatability are key. In this training session, participants will learn what lessons they can take from SRs to apply to their daily research to maximise reliability and demonstrate high calibre research synthesis. This session will be of great interest to researchers who may think SRs are too resource-demanding.

Background

Systematic reviews (SRs) are recognised as the 'gold standard' in evidence synthesis, but SRs are not always feasible or appropriate. Some questions are unsuitable for formal SR for a variety of reasons, for example, they are too simple or they do not attract sufficient stakeholder interest. In other situations, SR may not be feasible for a range of reasons, for example, a lack of available resources or funding, or reviewers working alone. SR methods require a substantial input of time and money, not

to mention a suitably experienced review team. However, non-SR methods can yield unreliable results or results that cannot be assessed for susceptibility to bias because of a lack of methodological detail.

Where SR is not undertaken for a valid reasons, reviewers can still improve the reliability of their syntheses by adhering to key lessons from SRs and other forms of evidence review. In particular, transparency, objectivity, and repeatability are key. Typically, applying these principals to often unreliable traditional reviews does not require substantial additional effort, but planning and *a priori* methods are key.

Description

In this training session, participants will learn what lessons they can take from SRs to apply to their daily research to maximise reliability and demonstrate high calibre research synthesis. The half-day workshop (3 hours) will introduce systematic reviews and other forms of formalised evidence review (rapid evidence assessments and quick scoping reviews), describe the formalised methods required to undertake such a review, describe how participants can get involved with an evidence review, and discuss what lessons attendees can take away from systematic reviews to make their work more transparent, objective, repeatable and reliable.

A mix of presentations and practical exercises will demonstrate the tools available to reviewers and also highlight the importance of choosing full systematic review methods when appropriate. The session will also stress the need for clear and transparent caveats regarding any method that is not a gold standard SR, and hence will attract participants from outside the current CEE network who can learn the benefits of CEE methods.

Learning Objectives

1. To be aware of formalised evidence review methods
2. To understand the limitations of traditional literature reviews
3. To understand the key stages of evidence review methods
4. To appreciate the need for comprehensiveness, transparency, objectivity and repeatability throughout the review process
5. To learn how participants can become involved with formalised evidence reviews
6. To understand methods for applying systematic approaches to their own research
7. To be aware of resources available to assist in making their research more systematic and reliable