

Methods of Synthesising Qualitative Evidence for Policy and Health Technology Assessments: A case study in knowledge transfer

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Synthesising health research

- Traditionally undertaken to enable evidence based decision-making about healthcare interventions

“Until recently, evidence given ‘highest priority’ was RCTs demonstrating *effectiveness* of an intervention

- However, increasingly recognised that other types of evidence (e.g. qualitative studies) may be important in the decision making process and understanding ‘the full picture’



Qualitative synthesis can:

- Help assess effectiveness & appropriateness of health & social interventions
- Provide context for interpreting & explaining trial results e.g. understanding heterogeneity in outcomes
- Provide evidence on subjective experience of those involved in developing, delivering and receiving an intervention.

(Cochrane Qualitative Methodology Group)

Synthesis of qualitative research:

"On-going since the 1980s

"There is no single approach – various methods are available

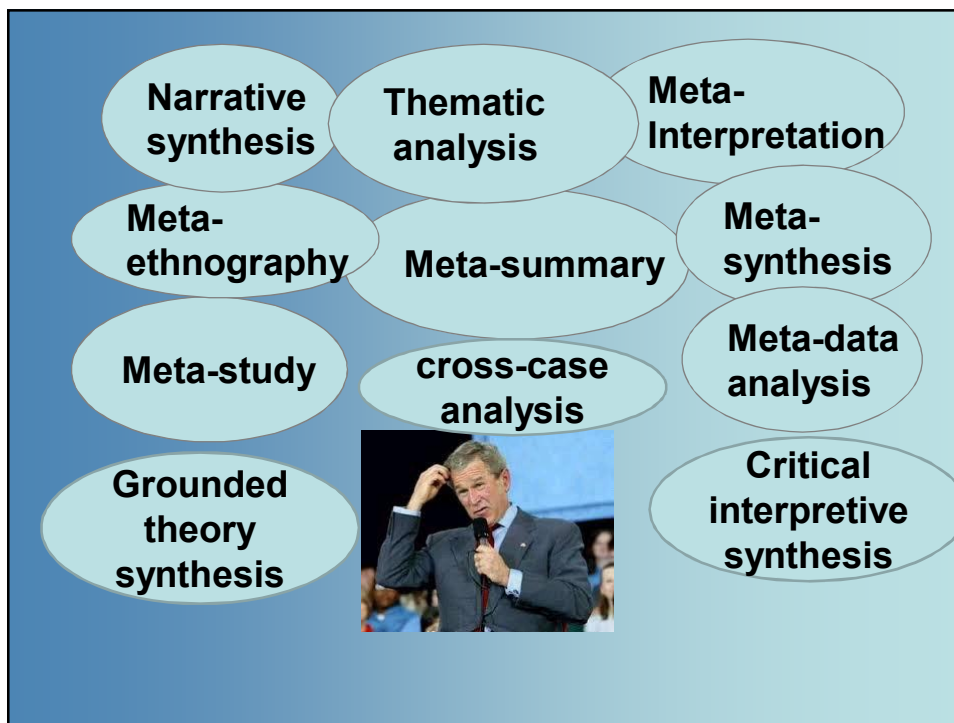
"Many areas of debate and discussion e.g.

"Whether qualitative studies should be synthesised and, if so, how.

"Many challenges e.g.

"The identification and quality assessment of relevant studies.

"Confusing & daunting terminology.

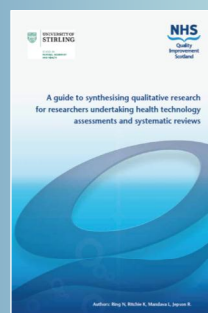




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The work we did with HIS

1. A Guide to Synthesising Qualitative Research for Researchers undertaking Health Technology Assessments and Systematic Reviews . Ring et al (2010)
2. Methods of synthesising qualitative research studies for Health Technology Assessment Ring et al (2011)



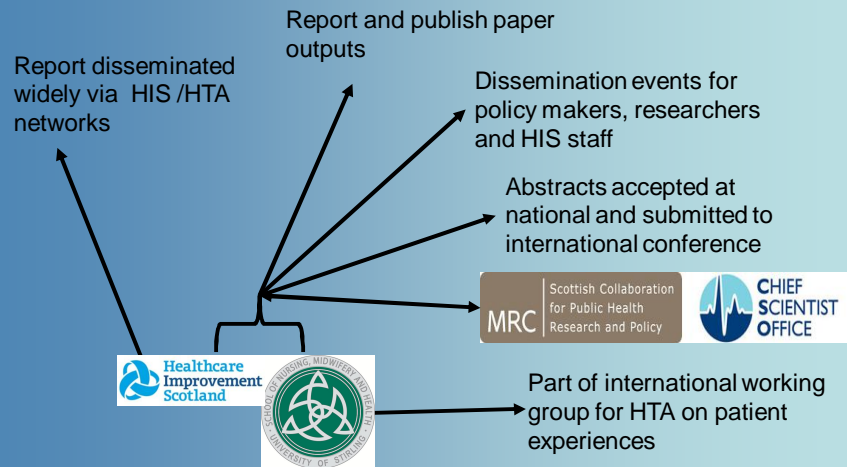
Purpose of our work

- “ To identify the main approaches to synthesis of qualitative evidence
- “ To identify reviews conducted using the eight main methods for synthesising qualitative studies
- “ To summarise reviews by their use of the eight methods, highlighting the methods used most generally and specifically in relation to *health technology assessment* topics.

Results

- “ 107 reviews were identified using one of eight main methods.
- “ Four methods (meta-ethnography, meta-study, meta-summary, and thematic synthesis) have been most widely used and have a role within HTA.
- “ Meta-ethnography is the leading method for synthesizing qualitative health research. Thematic synthesis is also useful for integrating qualitative and quantitative findings.
- “ Four other methods (critical interpretive synthesis, grounded theory synthesis, meta-interpretation, and cross-case analysis) have been under-used in health research and their potential in health technology assessments is currently under-developed.

Knowledge Transfer Activities



Other non-tangible outputs

- Collaboration and relationship building between different organisations which should lead to future joint working
- Opportunity to upgrade and improve our understanding of new and innovative methods in the area
- Opportunity to gain recognition as 'experts' in the field

Conclusions

“Synthesising evidence has an important role in knowledge exchange and transfer activities between researchers and policy makers

“Qualitative data is seen as being increasingly relevant to decision making

“Qualitative synthesis is still in a development stage

“Working in partnership has many benefits over and above traditional research outputs