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PRISMA Guidelines: Ensuring Rigor and Transparency in Systematic Reviews

In the world of research, systematic reviews are an essential tool for understanding the current state of knowledge on a particular topic. Systematic reviews aim to identify and synthesize all available evidence on a specific research question in a comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible manner. However, writing a high-quality systematic review can be a challenging task. That's where the PRISMA guidelines come in.

PRISMA stands for Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, and it is a set of guidelines designed to help authors report their systematic reviews clearly and transparently. These guidelines help to ensure that your systematic review is of high quality and can be easily understood by other researchers and readers.

To start with, PRISMA guidelines consist of a checklist of 27 items that authors should include in their systematic review report. These items include the title, abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion sections and details on the search strategy, study selection, data extraction, and risk of bias assessment.

The key PRISMA guidelines to keep in mind when writing a systematic review

The following are some important points to consider when following the PRISMA guidelines:

1. Start by clearly defining your research question and selecting relevant studies.
   The first step in conducting a systematic review is to formulate a clear research question. This will guide the search for relevant studies. The PRISMA guidelines recommend using a protocol outlining the research question, inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies, and data extraction and synthesis
methods.

2. Be transparent in your reporting, explaining your methods and criteria for selecting studies.
   To make your systematic review replicable and transparent, it is essential to report your search strategy, including databases searched, search terms used, and any other sources consulted. The PRISMA guidelines recommend providing a flow diagram showing the number of studies identified, screened, and included/excluded at each review stage.

3. Thoroughly assess the quality of each study you include in your review.
   The PRISMA guidelines recommend assessing the risk of bias in each study included in the review. This involves evaluating the study design, methods used to collect and analyze data, and any potential sources of bias. The risk of bias assessment should be reported for each study included in the review.

4. Be careful to avoid bias in your analysis and reporting of the data.
   To minimize bias in your systematic review, using standardized methods for data extraction and analysis is important. The PRISMA guidelines recommend using at least two reviewers to independently extract data from each study and resolve discrepancies through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer. Statistical methods should be used to combine the results of studies, and heterogeneity should be assessed using appropriate methods.

5. Use appropriate statistical methods to synthesize the results of your analyzed studies.
   Meta-analysis is a statistical method used to combine the results of studies included in a systematic review. The PRISMA guidelines recommend reporting the effect size, confidence interval, and p-value for the overall effect estimate. Subgroup and sensitivity analyses should also be conducted to explore the robustness of the results.

6. Report your findings clearly and comprehensively, including any limitations or areas for further research.
   The PRISMA guidelines recommend reporting the results of your systematic review clearly and concisely. The findings should be presented in a way that is easy to understand, with appropriate tables and figures. Any review limitations should be acknowledged, and suggestions for future research should be made.

Prospero registry: A Valuable Resource for Systematic Reviews
Systematic reviews are crucial in synthesizing the available evidence on a particular research question. However, conducting a systematic review can take time and effort. That’s where the
Prospero registry comes in.

The Prospero registry is an international database of prospectively registered systematic health and social care reviews maintained by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) at the University of York. It provides a platform for researchers to register the protocol of their systematic reviews before initiating the review process. This registry aims to increase transparency, reduce bias, and improve the quality of systematic reviews.

But why is this important? Researchers can use the Prospero registry to search for existing systematic reviews in their area of interest to avoid duplicating research efforts. Policymakers can use the registry to find relevant systematic reviews to inform decision-making. The registry is also a valuable resource for systematic reviewers to ensure their research is novel and has yet to be published.

Now, let’s discuss some tools to help authors write a systematic review following PRISMA guidelines. Here are some of the most popular ones:

- **PRISMA Checklist**: The PRISMA checklist is a 27-item checklist that helps authors ensure they have included all the necessary information in their systematic review.
- **PRISMA Flow Diagram**: The PRISMA flow diagram is a graphical representation of the flow of studies through the systematic review process. It helps authors show how many studies were identified, screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review.
- **Covidence**: Covidence is a web-based platform helps authors conduct systematic reviews more efficiently. It allows authors to import references, screen articles, extract data, and manage conflicts.
- **EndNote**: EndNote is a reference management software that helps authors organize their references and create bibliographies. It can import references, format citations and bibliographies,
and collaborate with co-authors.

- Rayyan: Rayyan is a free web-based tool for systematic review authors to screen, select, import studies, and create a database of included studies. Rayyan also has features for collaboration and data extraction.
- RevMan: This software package can be used to perform meta-analyses of the data included in a systematic review.
- GRADEpro: This tool can be used to assess the quality of evidence in a systematic review and to develop recommendations based on that evidence.

Overall, following PRISMA guidelines is crucial when writing a systematic review. It ensures that your review is transparent and high-quality, making it easier for other researchers to understand and build on your work. Using the tools mentioned above, authors can make writing a systematic review following PRISMA guidelines much easier and more efficient.

We hope you found this informative and helpful. Good luck with your systematic review.

**Dose Jaypee Journals ask authors to use PRISMA guidelines while preparing systematic reviews or meta-analyses?**

Yes, if you plan to submit a manuscript to Jaypee Journals, it’s important to note that it requires authors to follow specific guidelines when preparing systematic reviews or meta-analyses.

To comply with the guidelines, authors must provide a flowchart detailing articles' screening, selection, and inclusion, along with a detailed description of the search strategy and study selection criteria. It might seem like a lot of work but ensuring that your work is of the highest quality possible is worth it.

To become more familiar with the PRISMA guidelines, visit the Author Instruction page of the Jaypee Journals journal of your choice in the Review articles section; you'll find the information to refer to the PRISMA statement and checklist for reporting. It's always good to have some guidance.

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