Conducting a Literature Review

What is a Literature Review?

A research literature review is a systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners. *

> * Fink, A. (2005). Conducting Research Literature Reviews. London: Sage.

Why Conduct a Literature Review?

1. To establish your credibility by demonstrating that you are familiar with the body of knowledge already published on your topic.
2. To show how your research is linked to prior published research.
3. To integrate and summarize what is known in your research area.
4. To learn from the published research and to stimulate new ideas.

What Does a Literature Review Do?

1. Tells the reader that you know the research in the area and increases the reader's confidence in your professional competence.
2. Places your research project in a context and demonstrates its relevance by making connections to a body of knowledge.
3. Points out areas where prior studies agree, disagree, and where major questions remain. It collects what is known up to a point in time and indicates the direction for future research.
4. Identifies blind alleys and suggest hypotheses for replication. It divulges procedures, techniques and research designs worth copying.
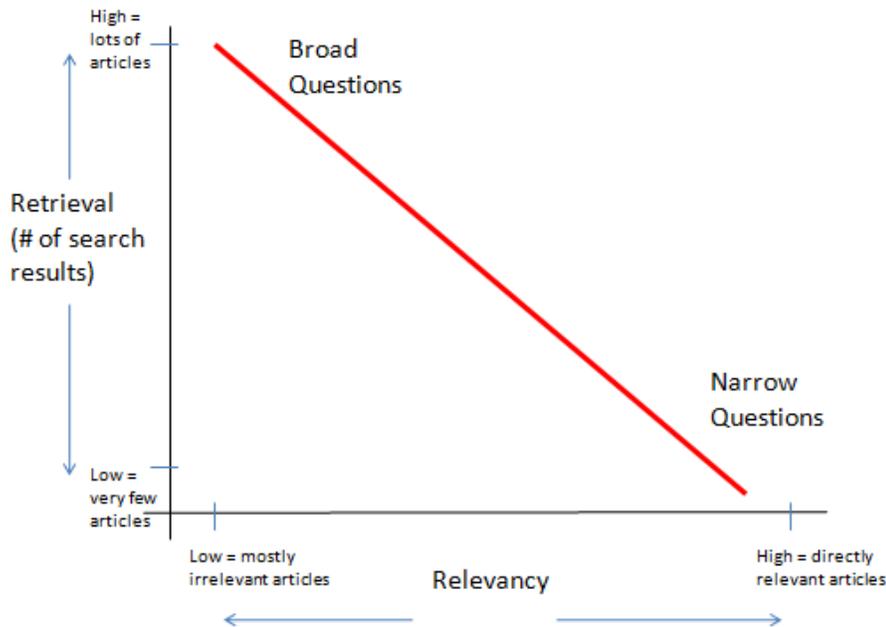
Types of Reviews

1. Self-study – increases your reader's confidence in an area that is rarely published.
2. Context review – places your project in the big picture.
3. Historical review – traces the development of an issue over time.
4. Theoretical review – compares how different theories address an issue.
5. Methodological review – points out how methodologies vary by study.
6. Integrative review – summarizes what is known at a particular point in time.

Developing a Strategy for a Literature Review

1. **Design your question**. The question usually arises out of some uncertainty in clinical care. Your question should be clear and focused. You can use the PICO method for producing a well-designed question. http://med.mercer.edu/libraries/mobile-ebm/picoquestion.htm
2. **Select your key words/search terms.** Underscoring the key words in the question will help you to identify initial search terms. Using these terms will help you create a search strategy based on text words. Selecting general

or nonspecific terms will generate a long list of studies, many of which may be unrelated to your study. More specific search terms will result in a more effective and focused search strategy.

How Questions Influence Search Results

3. **Search the Literature.** Once you have developed a clinical question and chosen your key words/search terms, the next step is to decide which tool you should use to search the literature. Here are some suggestions on where to start:

Medicine Databases

   PubMed
   http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu/entrez/query.fcgi?dr=abstract&holding=musmlib
   Cochrane Library
   http://www.thecochranelibrary.com.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu/view/0/index.html
   PsycINFO
   http://web.ebscohost.com.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu/ehost/search/basic?sid=fe1cef40-2b20-4397-88f9-581008dd10f1%40sessionmgr104&vid=1&hid=119

Multidisciplinary Databases

   Web of Science
   http://isiknowledge.com.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu
   ScienceDirect
   http://www.sciencedirect.com.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu/science/browse/subscribed/

Websites (associations, organizations & government)

   Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
   http://www.cdc.gov/
   National Institutes of Health
   http://www.nih.gov/
   Medical Associations and Societies
   http://www.medilexicon.com/medicalassociations.php
   Google Scholar (indexes conference proceedings, scholarly articles, and scholarly books)

http://scholar.google.com.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu/

Grey Literature

Dissertations and Theses

http://search.proquest.com.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu/dissertations?accountid=12383

PapersFirst (index of papers presented at conferences worldwide)

http://www.galileo.usg.edu.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu/express?link=zopi

Google Scholar (indexes conference proceedings, scholarly articles, and scholarly books)

http://scholar.google.com.medlib-proxy.mercer.edu/

Statistics

Health Statistics & Research

http://med.mercer.edu/libraries/healthstatistics.htm

Questions?

Contact the Health Sciences Library, library@memorialhealth.com, 912-350-8345