Evaluating the Usefulness of Review Articles

Determine **Relevance**

*Is this article worth taking the time to read? If the answer to any of these questions is No, it may be better to read other articles first.*

**Based on the conclusion of the abstract:**

A. **Is the article proposing to answer a specific clinical question or questions? Did the authors study an outcome that patients would *care* about?**
   - Yes (go on)
   - No (stop)

B. **Is the problem studied one that is *common* to your practice and the intervention feasible?**
   - Yes (go on)
   - No (stop)

C. **Will this information, if true, require you to *change* your current practice?**
   - Yes (go on)
   - No (stop)

Determine **Validity**

*If the answers to all three questions above are Yes, then continued assessment of the article is mandatory.*

**D. Finding** the studies?

- Were the methods used to *locate* relevant studies comprehensive and clearly stated?.. Yes  No (Stop)
- Did they clearly *outline* study inclusion criteria that generalize to my practice?........ Yes  No (Stop)
- Was the study selection independently performed by at least two investigators? ........ Yes  No

E. **Validity:** Did the authors perform an “official” validity assessment of the studies using appropriate criteria?.......................................................... Yes  No (Stop)

- Was the assessment *independently* performed by at least two investigators?........ Yes  No
- Were the included studies *reasonably* valid? ............................................................. Yes  No

If not, how did the authors handle this (*a priori* exclusion or sub-analysis based on study quality)? What effect might the lack of validity have on the results?

________________________________________________________________________________________

F. **Analyzing** the Data: Is it reasonable to combine these studies?

- Were the included studies statistically *homogenous*?............................................ Yes  No

If not, how was this addressed (reasonable explanation, random effects model)?

- Were the populations, interventions, outcomes, and outcome measurements combined in a way that makes intuitive sense?............................................ Yes  No
- Could *publication bias* have occurred? ................................................................. Yes  No

H. **Interpreting** the results: were they meaningful?

- Were the results statistically different? ................................................................. Yes  No
  - If so, were they clinically significant? ................................................................. Yes  No
  - If not, was the power adequate to find a difference? ......................................... Yes  No

- What will you do with the results?

________________________________________________________________________________________

Revision 2001: Information Mastery Working Group. Adapted from material developed at McMaster University.