

A Worksheet for Qualitative Research

1. 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. Did the authors study an outcome that patients would *care* about? (Be careful to avoid results that require extrapolation to an outcome that truly matters to patients)

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)

2. Determine Validity: *If the answers to all three questions above are Yes, then continued assessment of the article is mandatory. Study design flaws are common; fatal flaws are arresting.*

D. Was the appropriate method used to answer the question? Yes No (Stop)
Interviews or focus groups should be used to study perceptions
Observation is required to evaluate behaviors

E. Was appropriate and adequate sampling used to get the best information? Yes No
Random sampling is not used in qualitative research. Instead, subjects are selected with the idea that they are best suited to provide appropriate information. Assurance that enough people were studied to provide sufficient information should be found in the description.

F. Was an iterative process of collecting information used? Yes No
In qualitative research, the research learns about the topic as the research progresses. The study design should consist of data collection and analysis, followed by more data collection and analysis, in an iterative fashion, until no more information is obtained.

G. Was a thorough analysis presented? Yes No
A good qualitative study not only presents the findings but provides a thorough analysis of the data. Beware studies that simply present results without interpretation.

H. Are the background and training of the investigators described? Yes No
Since the investigator is being relied on for analysis of the data, we must know their training and biases. Knowing these characteristics, we can use them to evaluate their conclusions.