

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?
