

Research Brief

Rapid reviews: An international survey and consensus-building exercise reveals numerous terms and methods being used

Summary

Our international survey and consensus-building exercise identified 80 rapid review products reporting numerous streamlined methods, with over 30 different terms used to describe a rapid review. The primary rationale for conducting a rapid review was the decision-makers' need for timely access to information. The consensus-building exercise revealed that some streamlined steps (such as one reviewer and verifier for data abstraction and quality appraisal vs. one reviewer only) might be more desirable than others to stakeholders.

Implications

Numerous knowledge synthesis centers are conducting rapid reviews internationally, yet few studies have evaluated the accuracy, comprehensiveness, potential risk of bias, timeliness, and feasibility of rapid review approaches.

Further research on rapid reviews is warranted. In particular, a prospective study comparing the results of rapid reviews to those obtained through systematic reviews on the same topic is necessary.

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What is the current situation?

- Rapid reviews are knowledge synthesis products in which certain aspects of the systematic review process are modified or omitted in order to produce timely information
- Evidence suggests that decision-makers are currently using rapid reviews to inform their decision-making processes; noted as being particularly useful for urgent and emergent decision-making

Objective

- To solicit experiences with and perceptions of rapid reviews from stakeholders, including researchers, policy-makers, industry, journal editors, and healthcare providers

How was the study conducted?

- A protocol to conduct an international electronic survey and consensus-building exercise using a modified Delphi approach was compiled and is available upon request
- *Methods for the electronic survey*
 - A 16-item survey on rapid review methods was administered internationally via FluidSurvey to 63 rapid review producing organizations
- *Methods for the consensus-building exercise*
 - 156 stakeholders were asked to participate in a ranking exercise of the six most frequent rapid review approaches identified through our scoping review and survey using FluidSurvey
 - Results were presented to participants, followed by a facilitated discussion and re-ranking exercise (either online using FluidSurvey or in-person)

What did the study find?

- Forty rapid review producers responded to our survey (63% response rate)
 - Several rapid review approaches were identified, including shortcuts, such as updating the literature search of previous reviews (94%); limiting the search strategy by date of publication (90%), and; having only one reviewer screen (85%), abstract data (83%) and assess the quality of studies (85%).
- The consensus-building exercise included input from 113 stakeholders on the rapid review approaches from the survey
 - One approach was ranked the most feasible (72%, 81/113 responses), with the lowest perceived risk of bias (12%, 12/103); it also ranked 2nd in timeliness (37%, 38/102) and 5th in comprehensiveness (5%, 5/100).



This research was funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research/Drug Safety and Effectiveness Network and conducted by investigators affiliated with the following institutions:

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