

Series: Emerging Knowledge Synthesis Methods for Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence Knowledge synthesis research: A bibliometric analysis

Summary

This bibliometric study provides a quantitative analysis of the knowledge synthesis literature. Most notably, it identifies a broad range of journals and authors reporting on methods, as well as an absence of subject headings used for indexing. In addition, our study includes an article published in 1909, highlighting an enduring interest knowledge synthesis methods.

Implications

The bibliometric study highlights a lack of subject headings that help researchers and research users identify articles that describe and explain specific synthesis methods.

Subject headings that identify distinct methods would provide clarity and assist researchers or research users in locating literature offering guidance on different methods of evidence synthesis.

Reference: Perrier L, Lightfoot D, Kealey MR, et al. Knowledge synthesis research: a bibliometric analysis. *Journal of clinical epidemiology*. 2016 May 31;73:50-7.

PMID: [26912123](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26912123/)

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What is the current situation?

- There are numerous strategies to synthesize knowledge that go beyond traditional systematic reviews.
- Currently available summaries of knowledge synthesis methods lack rigor and exhaustiveness.
- To address this gap, a series of 6 journal articles and 3 commentaries describing the results of a scoping review on emerging knowledge synthesis methods was published.

What is the objective?

To describe the volume and attributes of original research available in PubMed on emerging knowledge synthesis methods (excluding traditional systematic reviews).

How was the review conducted?

- Comprehensive literature searches of several databases (e.g., MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, PsycINFO, the Cochrane Library) were performed from inception to December 5, 2011.
- Studies were identified as relevant if they fulfilled the following criteria: (1) all study designs including qualitative and quantitative methods; (2) synthesis methods above and beyond traditional systematic reviews, excluding methods on economic analysis, or clinical practice guidelines; and (3) disciplines of health or philosophy.
- Study selection was done by two reviewers, independently.
- A bibliometric analysis using mathematical and statistical methods to analyze and measure the quantity of publications was conducted.

What did the review find?

- After screening 17,962 records, 608 studies related to the topic of knowledge synthesis methods were analyzed.
- Although there has been a steady increase in publications on knowledge synthesis methods since 2003, studies are dispersed among a large number of journals.
- Similarly, a large number of authors are publishing on these methods but in limited numbers for any individual.
- Relevant Medical Subject Headings that were applied most often to these studies included qualitative research, research design, meta-analysis as topic, and review literature as topic.

Funded by CIHR