

A scoping review examines the conduct and reporting of scoping reviews

Summary

A scoping review was conducted to identify studies that used and/or described scoping review methods; guidelines for reporting scoping reviews and studies that assessed the quality of reporting of scoping reviews. A high degree of variability in the conduct and reporting of scoping reviews was observed, which may impact health decision-making. A comparison of the methods of the 494 scoping reviews with the JBI methods guidance revealed a lack of compliance on key items. However, given that this guidance is relatively new, it could suggest a lack of awareness of the methodological rigour required to conduct a scoping review. A future update of our scoping review would help to highlight any improvement(s) in the conduct of scoping reviews.

Implications

The number of published scoping reviews has increased steadily in recent years. As scoping reviews are used to inform research agendas and identify implications for policy and practice, improvements in the conduct and reporting of scoping reviews are imperative. Further research on scoping review methodology is warranted, and guideline(s) to standardize reporting are needed.

Reference: Tricco AC, Lillie E, Zarin W, et al. A scoping review on the conduct and reporting of scoping reviews. *BMC medical research methodology*. 2016 Feb 9;16(1):1.

PMID: [26857112](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26857112/)

For more information, please contact Dr. Andrea Tricco: triccoa@smh.ca

What is the current situation?

- Scoping reviews are used to identify knowledge gaps, set research agendas, and identify implications for decision-making. Some evidence suggests that the conduct and reporting of scoping reviews is inconsistent in the literature, yet this has not been thoroughly examined.
- Scoping review methods require clarification in order to develop methodological and reporting standards. The Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) recently published methodological guidance for the conduct of scoping reviews.

What is the objective?

To complete a scoping review within the realm of healthcare to synthesize: 1) articles that utilized and/or described scoping review methods; 2) guidelines for reporting scoping reviews; and 3) studies that assessed the quality of reporting of scoping reviews.

How was the review conducted?

- The methods of the review were based on the framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley and further refined by the JBI manual.
- Nine electronic databases were searched for published and unpublished scoping reviews, scoping review methodology papers and reporting guidance for scoping reviews, conducted within the domain of health. Publications that did not synthesize literature were excluded.
- Two independent reviewers screened citations for inclusion. Data abstraction was performed by 1 reviewer and verified by a second reviewer. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. A post-hoc analysis to compare agreement between the JBI methods guidance (2015) and the conduct reported in the included scoping reviews was also done.

What did the review find?

- 516 articles were included, of which 494 were scoping reviews disseminated between 1999 and 2014 (with 45% published after 2012).
- Most of the scoping reviews were conducted in either North America (53%) or Europe (39%), and reported a public source of funding (64%). The number of included studies ranged from 1 to 2,600 (mean of 118).
- Using the JBI methods guidance, 13% of the scoping reviews reported the use of a protocol, 36% used 2 reviewers for citation screening, 29% used 2 reviewers for full-text screening, 30% used 2 reviewers for data charting, and 43% used a pre-defined charting form. In most cases, the results of the scoping review were used to identify evidence gaps (85%), provide recommendations for future research (84%), or identify strengths and limitations (69%). We did not identify any guidelines for reporting of scoping reviews or studies that assessed the quality of scoping review reporting.

Funded by CIHR and CADTH