

Adapted from [Meeting the review family: exploring review types and associated information retrieval requirements. Sutton A, Clowes M, Preston L, Booth A. Health Info Libr J. 2019 Sep;36\(3\):202-222. PMID: 31541534. doi: 10.1111/hir.12276.](#)

Review Family	Review Types in Family	Definitions and/or purpose of review type
1. Traditional Reviews	1. Critical review 2. Integrative Review <i>aka Integrative Synthesis</i> 3. Narrative review 4. Narrative summary 5. State of the art review	<p>“Aims to demonstrate writer has extensively researched literature and critically evaluated its quality. Goes beyond mere description to include degree of analysis and conceptual innovation. Typically results in hypothesis or model”</p> <p>“Umbrella term for synthesis methods for integrating qualitative and quantitative data. Can be used to guide the summary and analysis of literature in order to draw conclusions that provide a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon than existed prior to the review More specifically, ‘The integrative review method is an approach (primarily within nursing research) that allows for the inclusion of diverse methodologies (i.e. experimental and non-experimental research).”</p> <p>“Used to describe a ‘conventional’ review of the literature, particularly when contrasted with a systematic review”</p> <p>“An overview of the available evidence addressing a research question or set of research questions related to a single topic, often produced within a short time frame”</p> <p>“Tend to address more current matters in contrast to other combined retrospective and current approaches. May offer new perspectives on issue or point out area for further research”</p>
2. Systematic Reviews	1. Cochrane review of effects 2. Comparative effectiveness review 3. Diagnostic Systematic Review <i>aka Diagnostic Test Accuracy Review</i> 4. Meta-analysis 5. Network meta-analysis	<p>“Cochrane Reviews are systematic summaries of evidence of the effects of healthcare interventions. They are intended to help people make practical decisions. For a review to be called a ‘Cochrane Review’ it must be in CDSR (Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews) or CMR (Cochrane Methodology Register). The specific methods used in a Review are described in the text of the review. Cochrane Reviews are prepared using Review Manager (RevMan) software provided by the Collaboration, and adhere to a structured format that is described in the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions.”</p> <p>“Depicts how the relative benefits and harms of a range of options compare, rather than to answer a narrow question of whether a single therapy is safe and effective”</p> <p>“Systematic reviews of diagnostic test accuracy summarize the evidence about test accuracy. Ideally, they also investigate why the results may vary among studies, compare the performance of alternative tests, and help the reader to put the evidence in a clinical context”</p> <p>“Technique that statistically combines the results of quantitative studies to provide a more precise effect of the results”</p> <p>“A network meta-analysis starts with a network of evidence: the relevant treatments and the clinical trials that have compared those treatments directly. Its structure is often readily apparent from a diagram in</p>

	<p>6. Prognostic review</p> <p>7. Psychometric review</p> <p>8. Review of economic evaluations</p> <p>9. Systematic review</p> <p>10. Systematic review of Epidemiology Studies <i>aka Prevalence and/or Incidence Review</i> <i>Etiology and/or Risk Review</i></p>	<p>which each node represents a treatment (or perhaps a class of treatments), and each link or edge connects treatments that have been directly compared in one or more RCTs.”</p> <p>“To determine the overall prognosis for a condition, the link between specific prognostic factors and an outcome and/or prognostic/prediction models and prognostic tests.”</p> <p>“To evaluate the psychometric properties of a certain test, normally to determine how the reliability and validity of a particular test or assessment.”</p> <p>“An economic evaluation identifies, measures, values and compares the costs and outcomes of a technology with its relevant comparator.”</p> <p>“Seeks to systematically search for, appraise and synthesis research evidence, often adhering to guidelines on the conduct of a review”</p> <p>“A systematic review to determine the prevalence and/or incidence of a certain condition”</p>
<p>3. Review of Reviews</p>	<p>1. Review of Reviews <i>aka Overview</i></p> <p>2. Umbrella review</p>	<p>“Summary of the [medical] literature that attempts to survey the literature and describe its characteristics’ (Specific): May also be used to refer to a Cochrane Overview of Reviews, which ‘are intended primarily to summarize multiple Cochrane Intervention reviews addressing the effects of two or more potential interventions for a single condition or health problem. In the absence of a relevant Cochrane Intervention review, Cochrane Overviews may additionally include systematic reviews published elsewhere.”</p> <p>“Specifically refers to review compiling evidence from multiple reviews into one accessible and usable document.”</p>
<p>4. Rapid Reviews</p>	<p>1. Rapid Review <i>aka Rapid Evidence Synthesis</i></p> <p>2. Rapid evidence assessment</p> <p>3. Rapid Realist Synthesis <i>aka Rapid Realist Review</i></p>	<p>“A type of knowledge synthesis in which components of the systematic review process are simplified or omitted to produce information in a short period of time”</p> <p>“A process that is faster and less rigorous than a full systematic review but more rigorous than ad hoc searching, it uses a combination of key informant interviews and targeted literature searches to produce a report in a few days or weeks”</p> <p>“Applies a realist approach to knowledge synthesis (“What works for whom under what circumstances?”) to produce a product that is useful to policy makers in responding to time-sensitive and/or emerging issues within limited time and resources.”</p>

<p>5. Qualitative Reviews <i>aka</i> Experiential Reviews</p>	<p>1. Qualitative Evidence Synthesis <i>aka</i> <i>Qualitative Systematic Review</i></p> <p>2. Qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis</p> <p>3. Qualitative meta-synthesis</p> <p>4. Qualitative research synthesis</p> <p>5. Best fit framework synthesis</p> <p>6. Framework synthesis</p> <p>7. Meta-aggregation</p> <p>8. Meta-ethnography <i>aka</i> <i>Extended Meta-Ethnography</i> <i>Meta-Ethnography Review</i></p>	<p>“Qualitative evidence synthesis is the broad term, popularised within the Cochrane Collaboration, for the group of methods used to undertake systematic reviews of qualitative research evidence. ‘Method for integrating or comparing the findings from qualitative studies. It looks for “themes” or “constructs” that lie in or across individual qualitative studies”</p> <p>“Specifically within social work, a synthesis of qualitative studies that results in generation of a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena studied that can be then used to develop theory and inform practice and policy. Methodology is designed to enable a synergistic understanding of phenomena with richness in diversity of settings, participants and qualitative traditions.”</p> <p>“Qualitative meta-synthesis is an intentional and coherent approach to analysing data across qualitative studies. It enables researchers to identify a specific research question and then search for, select, appraise, summarise, and combine qualitative evidence to address the research question”</p> <p>“Specifically within education, qualitative research synthesis, relies upon sophisticated interpretivist methods and is one of a range of refined approaches that has developed from efforts to offer synthesis methods with increasing levels of specialisation, criticality and interpretation”</p> <p>“The ‘best fit’(framework synthesis) approach applies new methods to identify theories in a systematic manner, and to create the a priori framework for the (qualitative evidence) synthesis. Otherwise it uses an innovative combination of existing methods of quality assessment, analysis and synthesis to complete the (review) process”</p> <p>“An evidence product which ‘uses existing framework from stakeholder consultation or literature as a template for data extraction and analysis. Data not adequately explained by the existing framework is analysed inductively to create themes that populate a revised framework”</p> <p>“The methodology of qualitative evidence synthesis that is ‘most transparently aligned with accepted conventions for the conduct of high-quality systematic reviews. Meta-aggregation is grounded in pragmatism and transcendental phenomenology.’ In a meta-aggregative review ‘the reviewer avoids re-interpretation of included studies, but instead accurately and reliably presents the findings of the included studies as intended by the original authors.”</p> <p>“Method for synthesising qualitative research and for developing models that interpret findings across multiple studies. Synthesises qualitative research to develop ‘translations of qualitative studies into one another’ (i.e. reciprocal translation analysis). Interpretive approach that aims to provide a new interpretation of these studies or a new theory to explain research findings encountered, rather than a simple aggregation. Re-analyses and compares the texts of published studies (rather than the original data of each) to produce a new interpretation. Involves induction and interpretation, whereby separate parts are brought together to form a ‘whole’ so that the result is greater than the sum of its parts. Translation of</p>
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	<p>9. Meta-interpretation</p> <p>10. Meta-narrative review</p> <p>11. Meta-study <i>aka meta-theory</i></p> <p>12. Meta-summary</p> <p>13. Thematic Synthesis <i>aka Thematic Analysis</i></p>	<p>studies into one another encourages the researcher to understand and transfer ideas, concepts and metaphors across different studies.”</p> <p>“Approach to the interpretive synthesis of qualitative research that seeks to maintain an interpretive epistemology that is congruent with most primary qualitative research. Fundamental features of meta-interpretation comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ideographic (i.e. not predetermined) approach to development of exclusion criteria • A focus on meaning in context • Interpretations as the raw data for synthesis • An iterative approach to the theoretical sampling of studies for synthesis • A transparent audit trail as a guarantor of the integrity and trustworthiness of the Synthesis” <p>“Seeks to illuminate a heterogeneous topic area by highlighting the contrasting and complementary ways in which researchers have studied the same or a similar topic. Metanarrative review looks historically at how particular research traditions have unfolded over time and shaped the kind of questions being asked and the methods used to answer them”</p> <p>“Meta-study derives questions from each of its three components to which it subjects the dataset and inductively generates a number of theoretical claims in relation to it.”</p> <p>“A new and original approach to handling a collection of qualitative studies. . . the frequency of each finding is determined and the higher the frequency of a particular finding, the greater its validity”</p> <p>“Combines and adapts approaches from both meta-ethnography and grounded theory. The method was developed out of a need to conduct reviews that addressed questions relating to intervention need, appropriateness and acceptability – as well as those relating to effectiveness – without compromising on key principles developed in systematic reviews”</p>
<p>6. Mixed Method Reviews</p>	<p>1. Mixed Methods Synthesis <i>aka Mixed Methods Review</i></p> <p>2. Bayesian Meta-Analysis <i>aka Bayesian Approach</i></p>	<p>“Any combination of methods where one significant component is a literature review (usually systematic). Within a review context it refers to a combination of review approaches for example combining quantitative with qualitative research or outcome with process studies”</p> <p>“Frequently cited but little used method for synthesising qualitative and quantitative findings. Begins with a prior distribution describing plausible potential values for parameters of interest. This distribution may be informed by previous data or expert beliefs, or it may allow any of a wide range of parameters to be equally true. Observed data is then described in relation to these parameter values. Finally, both parameter and likelihood data are multiplied to create a posterior distribution for each parameter with the mean, median or mode of the posterior distribution being handled as a point estimate and credible set limits being used to describe the surrounding uncertainty”</p>

	<p>3. EPPI-Centre Review <i>aka EPPI-Centre Outcomes plus Views Review</i></p> <p>4. Critical interpretive synthesis</p> <p>5. Narrative Synthesis <i>aka Textual Narrative Synthesis</i></p> <p>6. Realist Synthesis <i>aka Realist Review</i></p> <p>7. Rapid Realist Synthesis</p>	<p>“Mixed method synthesis that encompasses studies measuring effectiveness (e.g. from randomised controlled trials) and studies investigating people’s views and experiences (from qualitative research. The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre, Institute of Education, University of London sought to combine methods for assessing the likelihood of causal relationships with those that advance understanding of different social perspectives within a third, integrative review”</p> <p>“Involves an iterative approach to refining the research question and searching and selecting from the literature (using theoretical sampling) and defining and applying codes and categories. It also has a particular approach to appraising quality, using relevance – i.e. likely contribution to theory development – rather than methodological characteristics as a means of determining the ‘quality’ of individual papers”</p> <p>“Draws out central theories or causal mechanisms identified in multiple studies and builds an explanation of the body of research by telling the story of the evolution of the field or mapping the domains covered by the literature in an area. Created using the methods of thematic analysis, conceptual mapping, and critical reflection on the synthesis process. Textual narrative synthesis is an approach which arranges studies into more homogenous groups.”</p> <p>“Answers the question “What works for whom under what circumstances?” rather than “What works?”. Specifically, it seeks to ‘unpack the mechanism’ of how complex programmes work (or why they fail) in particular contexts and settings”</p> <p>“Applies a realist approach to knowledge synthesis (“What works for whom under what circumstances?”) to produce a product that is useful to policy makers in responding to time-sensitive and/or emerging issues within limited time and resources.”</p>
<p>7. Purpose Specific Reviews</p>	<p>1. Concept Synthesis <i>aka Concept Analysis Conceptual Analysis</i></p> <p>2. Content Analysis</p> <p>3. Expert Opinion/Policy Review</p> <p>4. Technology Assessment</p>	<p>“Synthesis method used to identify concepts, viewpoints or ideas. Focuses on identifying the defining attributes of the concepts and can be used to develop a synthesis model”</p> <p>“Research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (i.e. journal articles, books etcetera). Content analysis represents a tool for analysing a sample of research documents in a systematic and rule governed way. Broadly, content analysis can be translated into two levels of analysis: (i) analysing the manifest content of texts and documents by statistical methods and (ii) excavating latent content of the text and documents by interpreting the underlying meaning of terms and arguments”</p> <p>“To review and synthesize current expert opinion, text or policy on a certain phenomena”</p> <p>“Commissioned by decision making bodies (e.g. NICE in the UK), TARs assess the evidence submitted by manufacturers of the clinical efficacy and cost-effectiveness of their products. Manufacturers’ own</p>

	<p>Review (Health Technology Assessment) See also: Systematic Review Family (Systematic Review of Effectiveness; Comparative Effectiveness Review; Meta-analysis; Network Meta-Analysis; Review of Economic Evaluations)</p>	<p>systematic review methods will be critiqued and the evidence review group may perform their own searches”</p>
	<p>5. Scoping Review aka Scoping Study</p>	<p>“Preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of available research literature. Aims to identify nature and extent of research evidence (usually including ongoing research)”</p>
	<p>6. Mapping Review aka Evidence Map/Systematic Map/Systematic Mapping Review</p>	<p>“Map out and categorize existing literature from which to commission further reviews and/or primary research by identifying gaps in research literature”</p>
	<p>7. Methodological Review aka <i>Meta-Method Methodology Review</i></p>	<p>“To examine and investigate current research methods and potentially their impact on research quality.”</p>
	<p>8. Systematic Search and Review</p>	<p>“Combines strengths of critical review with a comprehensive search process. Typically addresses broad questions to produce ‘best evidence synthesis’”</p>
	<p>9. Systematized Review</p>	<p>“Attempt to include elements of systematic review process while stopping short of systematic review. Typically conducted as postgraduate student assignment”</p>