

# 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?

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### 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)?

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- 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?

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