



Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

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Committee on Standards for Systematic Reviews of CER

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Some Observations from AHRQ

- Evidence-based Practice Center Program 11 years old
- Historically, user driven and inclusive methods and processes
- Continually evaluating methods for systematic review
- EPC self-evaluation and external peer review
- Inappropriate variation in SR methods confusing and can lead to poor quality
- IOM committee can help move the methods research agenda forward

- Determining methods or “standards” for systematic review (SR) should not be different than doing so for “new” research (RCT, observational studies, etc.)
 - Is it easier to standardize reporting of studies and SR than to control quality of conduct
 - Is reporting an appropriate surrogate for quality?

Issues of Bias

- Methods guidance should identify and address specific known issues of bias
 - For example, in observational studies, selection bias and confounding
 - What are equivalents in SR (publication bias, etc.)
 - Different SR questions/topics may vary in the most appropriate study design to address the most important specific biases, i.e., blinding may not be as important when measuring hard outcomes



Heterogeneity in the Purpose of the SR

- SR is meant to meet the needs of decision makers
 - Results in heterogeneity of SR scope and questions
 - Methods of understanding information needs when designing the review protocol
 - Methods guidance should address heterogeneity of reviews and audiences



Research Agenda on Methods for SR

- Guidance should be based on best available evidence
 - Committee should identify where more methods research is needed
 - And identify which areas are most important to do first
- How to keep guidance dynamic rather than static