

A critical appraisal framework for public health papers

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www.publichealthy.com

Partly adapted from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) frameworks, available at

www.phru.nhs.uk

1. Objectives

- what?
- reasonable/useful? (in context of wider public health?)
- constant, or changed during course of study?

2. Methods

- design
 - appropriate? – RCT, if properly conducted, is highest quality trial for decreasing bias and confounding through randomisation
 - randomisation OK?
 - blinding OK?
 - outcomes appropriate? (QOL measured?)
 - how are patients selected? any bias?
 - what is control? – usual care? (reasonable) or, for blinding purposes, ‘sham intervention’?
 - ethics/consent appropriate?
- stats
 - all appropriate tests?
 - all described/referenced/justified?
 - were all analyses intended in original design?

3. Results

- presentation
 - appropriate summary? – is all data collected, presented?
 - what claim to have achieved?
 - all patients entered accounted for (i.e. if intention to treat)?
 - any conflict of interest in quoted references?
- internal validity
 - bias/confounding/chance ruled out? – including any potential bias in RCTs (e.g. measurement bias if self-reported); data mining?
 - baseline characteristics comparable?
 - follow-up long enough? (if not – funding issue?)
 - size/precision of treatment effect
- external validity
 - apply to my population?
 - take into account how patients selected for trial, and acceptability of any intervention
- authors' conclusions
 - causal association hinted at? (Bradford Hill?)
 - costs/harms associated with treatment assessed? (usually ‘no’)