

Assessing Literature to Determine Quality

Answer the questions on the grid to help you determine the quality of a journal article.

Article Assessment Grid Developed by the CoxHealth Library Services	YES	NO	N/A
Author			
1. Are all credentials of the authors evident?			
2. Are the authors professionals within the field they are writing about?			
3. Are the authors affiliated with an accredited institution?			
4. Have all authors provided a disclosure of any conflicts of interest?			
Journal			
5. Is the journal's audience a specific group of professionals? (e.g. surgeons, trauma nurses, pharmacists, administrators)			
6. Is the journal recognized as a significant source within the field?			
7. Is the journal associated with a society or other professional group? (e.g. ACOG, ADA, AHA, AORN)			
8. If so, is this a legitimate association recognized by professionals of the respective field?			
9. Is the citation for the article found using a well-regarded database? (e.g. Medline, CINAHL, Cochrane, PubMed)			
Quality of Research			
10. Was the purpose or goal for conducting the study clearly explained?			
11. Are the PICO elements easily identified? P=Patient/Population, I= Intervention, C=Comparison, O=Outcome			
12. Was the sample size adequate?			
13. Did the study span a reasonable length of time?			
14. Was the study conducted within the appropriate location(s) and/or population(s)?			
15. Were the locations and populations comparable when the study included multiple of either?			
16. Is the method or model of research described?			
17. Was the method/model properly executed?			
18. Do the authors explain any possible discrepancies or factors which may have influenced the research?			
19. Is an explanation provided describing how the data were analyzed?			
20. Does the research method described in the article fall above Background Information/Expert Opinion on the EBM Resource Pyramid ?			

I. Author(s)

Who is the author?

1. Are the credentials of the author(s) evident?

The author's credentials should be listed within the article. If not, "Google" the author and the name of the institution of affiliation of the author (*James Smith and Mt. Sinai*). Typically, the author is listed on the institution's web site as an employee. (e.g. *James Smith is a Nurse Manager for Mt. Sinai*)

2. Are the authors professionals within the field they are writing about?

This will usually be listed in the article or the citation. Most states provide an online listing of those licensed to practice in that state. For Missouri this site may be found: [Missouri Division of Professional Registration](#)

3. Are the authors affiliated with an accredited institution?

The author's affiliation is customarily listed in the article. If the institution is not familiar to the reader, it may be necessary to visit the accrediting body of the institution the author has listed. For example:

DNV GL-Healthcare (hospital): <http://dnvglhealthcare.com/hospitals>

JACHO (hospital): <http://www.qualitycheck.org>

LCME (medical): <http://lcme.org/directory/>

CCNE (nursing): <https://www.aacnursing.org/CCNE>

4. Have all authors provided a disclosure of any conflicts of interest?

This information should be provided within the article. A conflict of interest **must** be indicated if the article discusses brand-specific equipment or medication.

II. Journal

5. Is the journal's audience a specific group of professionals? (e.g. surgeons, trauma nurses, pharmacists, administrators)

See the publisher's web site. To locate the publisher's web site it is easiest to "Google" the name of the journal with quotation marks around the title (e.g. "New England Journal of Medicine").

6. Is the journal a recognized as a significant source within the field?

Again, see the publisher's web site. Most will provide an *About This Journal* or *Aims and Scopes* link.

7. Is the journal associated with a society or other professional group? (e.g. ACOG, ADA, AORN)

Many academic journals are affiliated with the main governing body for a specific profession. For example, the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)*, an official publication of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

8. If so, is this a legitimate association recognized by professionals of the respective field?

Professional associations should provide information about the group on their web site. Look for an *About* link. Who are the members of the Board of Directors? See if there are statistics about membership and information about conferences. Look for a "Publications" or "Research" link, which will list journals or other resources published by the organization.

9. **Is the citation found using a well-regarded database?**
(e.g. Medline, CINAHL, Cochrane, PubMed)

III. Quality of Research

10. **Was the purpose or goal for conducting the study clearly explained?**
The researchers should clearly explain what questions they hoped to answer and why.
11. **Are the PIO/PICO elements easily identifiable?**
P=Patient/population, I= Intervention, C=Comparison, O=Outcome
The following video provides a brief overview of PIO/PICO:
<https://coxhealth.wistia.com/medias/aqn6d8suyu>
12. **Was the sample size adequate?**
A study should evaluate an adequate number of subjects, usually within the same demographic and/or diagnosis or setting.
13. **Did the study span a reasonable length of time?**
An adequate span of time to conduct the study will vary by study. The researchers should explain how the appropriate length of time was determined.
14. **Was the study conducted within the appropriate location(s) and/or population(s)?**
This is usually a judgement of common sense. For instance, a study about geriatric populations is not going to take place in pediatric unit.
15. **Were the locations and populations comparable when the study included multiple of either?**
Researchers should provide details to explain the similarities of multiple locations and populations. Likewise, they should also explain any major differences.
16. **Is the method or model of research described?**
The article should provide a narrative describing the research process. (e.g. “We performed a comprehensive review of the literature on the treatment of BE...” *A systematic review of the evidence for radiofrequency ablation for Barrett's esophagus. European Surgery: ACA Acta Chirurgica Austriaca; 41(1): 19.*)
17. **Was the method/model appropriate for the study?**
It is not necessary to be well versed in all potential research designs. However, making a basic judgement about the proper execution of the method/model is usually common sense. Again, researchers should provide adequate detail describing the process.
17. **Do the authors explain any possible discrepancies or factors that may have influenced the research?**
Authors must acknowledge biases and problems with the model used in the study. For example, did the researchers use a hypothetical scenario vs. live subjects? Did an unexpected percentage of participants drop out of the study? If so, why?
18. **Is an explanation provided describing how the data were analyzed?**
Many researchers depend on professional statisticians or data analysis software to process data collected during the study. This is fine, but an explanation of how the data were analyzed should always be provided.
19. **Does the research method described in the article fall above Background**

Information/Expert Opinion on the [EBM Resource Pyramid](#)?
CINAHL (nursing and allied health literature) and Medline (medical literature) index resources include the document's Publication Type. This allows the user to limit accordingly.

For example, a Medline search could be limited to *Publication Type = Clinical Trial*. Library Services provides handouts with step-by-step instructions for limiting a search to evidence based Publication Types for both CINAHL and Medline:

[Limiting a CINAHL Search by Evidence Based Publication Types](#)

[Limiting a Medline Search by Evidence Based Publication Types](#)

Still Not Sure?

Contact the CoxHealth Library Services

E-Mail: Library@coxhealth.com