

## Appendix H Methodology checklist: qualitative studies

The criteria used in this checklist are adapted from:

- The Qualitative Research and Health Working Group, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (Bromley H, Dockery G, Fenton C, et al.) *Criteria for evaluating qualitative studies*. [www.liv.ac.uk/lstm/download/guidelines.pdf](http://www.liv.ac.uk/lstm/download/guidelines.pdf). Accessed 25 August 2003.
- National CASP Collaboration for Qualitative Methodologies. *Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) (2002) 10 questions to help you make sense of qualitative research*. Oxford: Public Health Research Unit.

<b>Study identification</b> <i>Include author, title, reference, year of publication</i>			
<b>Checklist completed by:</b>			
<b>Guideline topic:</b>		<b>Key question no:</b>	
<b>Criteria:</b>		<b>How well is this criterion addressed? (Circle one option for each question)</b>	
<b>1 Aims of the research</b>			
1.1	Are the aims and objectives of the research clearly stated?	Clearly described Unclear Not reported	Comments
1.2	Is a qualitative approach appropriate?	Appropriate Unclear Not appropriate	Comments
<b>2 Study design</b>			
2.1	Is (are) the research question(s) clearly defined and focused?	Clearly defined and focused Unclear Not focused Not defined	Comments
2.2	Are the methods used appropriate to the research question(s)?	Appropriate Unclear Inappropriate	Comments
<b>3 Recruitment and data collection</b>			
3.1	Is the recruitment or sampling strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Appropriate Unclear Not appropriate	
3.2	Are methods of data collection adequate to answer the research question?	Adequate Not adequate Not reported	Comments
3.3	Are the roles of researchers clearly	Clear	Comments

	described	Unclear Not reported	
3.4	Have ethical issues been addressed adequately?	Adequate Unclear Not adequate	Comments
<b>4 Data analysis</b>			
4.1	Is the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Rigorous Not rigorous	Comments
<b>5 Findings/interpretation</b>			
5.1.	Are the findings internally coherent, credible (valid)?	Valid Unclear Potential bias	Comments
5.2	Are the findings relevant?	Relevant Unclear Limited relevance	Comments
<b>6 Implications of research</b>			
6.1	Are the implications of the study clearly reported?	Clearly reported Unclear	Comments
6.2	Is there adequate discussion of the study limitations?	Adequate Inadequate Not reported	Comments
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY</b>			
How well was the study conducted? <i>Code ++, + or –</i>			
Are the results of this study directly applicable to the patient group targeted by this guideline?			Yes No

## ***H.1 Notes on the use of the methodology checklist:***

### ***qualitative studies***

There is considerable debate over what quality criteria should be used to assess qualitative studies. Quality in qualitative research can be assessed with the same broad concepts of validity and relevance used for quantitative research, but these need to be put in a different contextual framework to take into account the aims of qualitative research.

This qualitative checklist is designed for people with a basic understanding of qualitative research methodology, and is based on the broadly accepted principles that characterise qualitative research and that may affect its validity. The following notes provide hints for completing the checklist. A list of publications on qualitative research is provided at the end of these notes for further reading on this topic.

#### **H.1.1 Aims of the research**

Are the aims and objectives of the research clearly stated?

Hints

- What are the goals of the research?
- Why it is important?
- What is its relevance to the wider body of research and the specific field?

Is a qualitative approach appropriate?

Hints

- Does the research methodology seek to understand or illuminate the subjective experiences or views of research participants?
- Does the research methodology seek to understand WHAT is happening and the reasons WHY observed situations or outcomes occur?

#### **H.1.2 Study design**

Is (are) the research question(s) clearly defined and focused?

Hints

- Is (are) the question(s) relevant to the aim of the study?
- Is (are) the question(s) structured in a way that seeks to answer all the objectives of the study?

Are the methods used appropriate to the research question(s)?

Hints

- Is a range of methods used for triangulation, or is use of a single method justified?

- Has the researcher justified the research design (for example, have they discussed how they decided which methods to use?)

### **H.1.3 Recruitment and data collection**

Is the recruitment or sampling strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?

Hints

- Has the researcher explained how the participants were selected?
- Are the reasons for this choice discussed/compared to other strategies?
- Is it clear why some participants were not selected, or declined to take part?
- Are there details about who was selected and why (consider gender, age, ethnicity, marital status)
- Was the sample sufficient to understand the study context and population?

Are methods of data collection adequate to answer the research question?

Hints

- Is it clear how data was collected (topic, guides checklists, focus groups, semi-structured interviews)?
- Has the researcher justified the methods chosen?
- Are details provided about the methods used (for example for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews were conducted, did they use a topic guide)?
- If methods were modified during the study, has the researcher explained how, and why?
- Were data collection tools pilot tested?

Are the roles of researchers clearly described?

Hints

- Who conducted the research, how were they selected?
- Are the researchers skills, motives, background, position in terms of power-relations (gender, age, ethnicity, employment relations etc.) and perspective described and discussed?
- Have the researchers critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during the formulation of the research questions, data collection and sample recruitment?

Have ethical issues been addressed adequately?

Hints

- Are there sufficient details of how the research was explained to the participants?
- Are there details of what consent procedures were used? And how consent was obtained?
- Is it clear how confidentiality and privacy were assured in the study?
- Was approval sought from the ethics committee?

#### **H.1.4 Data analysis**

Is the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

Hints

- Is it clear how the researcher processed the raw data to arrive at the stated results?
- Were the categories and themes identified in advance, or derived from the data?
- Are all data taken into account in the analysis?
- Are responses/experiences compared and contrasted across different groups/individuals/study sites?
- Have the researchers critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?

#### **H.1.5 Findings/interpretation**

Are the findings internally coherent, credible (valid)?

Hints

- Are findings drawn from analysis of collected data rather than from the researcher's preconceptions?
- Is there an adequate discussion of the findings both for and against the researchers' arguments?
- Has the research critically reflected on the quality of the data collected and skills of the research team?

Are the findings relevant?

Hints

- Are the findings relevant to the study aims/objectives/questions?
- Is there a discussion about how the research contributes new knowledge or understanding in the field?

#### **H.1.6 Implications of research**

Are the implications of the study clearly reported?

Hints

- Are the findings placed in the local context (geographical, cultural, political, socioeconomic)?
- Are the findings discussed in wider context (in relation to other studies on the same topic)?
- Have findings been disseminated to key stakeholders including participants?

Is there adequate discussion of the study limitations?

Hints

- Are the weaknesses of the study design discussed?
- Is there a discussion of new areas where research is needed?

++	All or most of the criteria have been fulfilled. Where they have not been fulfilled the conclusions of the study or review are thought <b>very unlikely</b> to alter.
+	Some of the criteria have been fulfilled. Those criteria that have not been fulfilled or not adequately described are thought <b>unlikely</b> to alter the conclusions.
-	Few or no criteria fulfilled. The conclusions of the study are thought <b>likely or very likely</b> to alter.

The code allocated here, coupled with the study type, will decide the **level of evidence** that this study provides.

### ***Further reading***

Barbour RS (2001) Checklists for improving rigour in qualitative research: a case of the tail wagging the dog? *British Medical Journal* 322:1115–7.

Mays N, Pope C (2000) Assessing quality in qualitative research. *British Medical Journal* 320:50–2.

Miller G, Dingwall R, editors (1997) *Context and Method in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Seale C, Silverman D (1997) Ensuring rigour in qualitative research. *European Journal of Public Health* 7:379–84.