

PCW8



A Journal Editor's Guide to Successful Systematic Reviews: Common Challenges Faced by Submitting Authors, and How to Overcome Them

Whaley P¹

¹Lancaster University

Duration: half day

Background and significance: Systematic reviews (SR) are an increasingly important research tool for making sense of complex evidence around how environmental exposures affect people's health. However, developed as they were for clinical evidence, adaptation of SR methods to the environmental health context has not been straightforward. Many methodological issues remain unresolved.

In spite of the controversies, environmental health journals have started introducing new editorial policies which require that standards for environmental health SRs reflect those of the clinical field. This is presenting a challenge to many authors, as SRs conducted according to previously-acceptable standards are increasingly being rejected.

Environment International (IF 7.3) was the first environmental health journal to appoint a specialist SR editor and is known for its high standards for submitted manuscripts. The purpose of this workshop is to explain the reasons for these standards, present new data showing which stages of the SR process pose particular challenges for authors, and to provide specific, practical advice in overcoming these challenges.

An international panel of speakers will address the following topics:

- Why we need high standards for SRs, and how this is challenging submitting authors
- A framework for successful SR questions
- A practical exercise in translating review questions into effective search strategies
- Which tools authors should use to assess the quality of included studies
- Best practice in appraisal of certainty in results of a SR
- How protocol publication is a near-guarantee of acceptance of final submissions

Finally, there will be a moderated Q&A session with the panel, where audience members can get advice on any SRs they might be conducting.

Workshop participants will gain insight into the importance and fundamental accessibility of new, emerging standards for conduct of SRs. They will also have acquired a clear and readily-implemented strategy for meeting them.

Interest for the workshop

Systematic review methods are assuming an increasingly important role in environmental health research, helping identify and quantify health harms from a range of environmental exposures. While systematic review is in itself nothing new, understanding of how to implement these methods in environmental health research is evolving rapidly, and some journals are perceived as making increasingly controversial decisions about which SR approaches are acceptable for publication. This workshop gives detailed insight into an editor's perspectives on this issue and provides practical advice on meeting the rising expectations of environmental health journals.

Participants number: 50