

## Guidelines for Literature Reviews within PHIDS

### Purpose of a Literature Review

Literature reviews are conducted for a variety of reasons. Some of the possible reasons one might begin a literature review include:

- To provide background information needed to understand the topic;
- To establish the importance of the topic;
- To justify your choice of research question and method;
- To synthesize research information relevant to the topic;
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- To establish your work as one link in a chain of research that is developing knowledge;
- To identify best or promising practices.

Literature in a review may include journal articles, conference proceedings, dissertations, policy documents, internet documents, websites, newspapers or other print material depending upon the research question. To review means to read, summarize, critique, synthesize, weigh, and appraise.

### Types of Literature Reviews

#### Narrative Reviews

- traditional review in journals
- uncertain article retrieval, inclusion, and synthesis approaches
- articles often selected based on opinion of author
- greater potential for bias

#### Systematic and/or Critical Reviews

- clearly formulated question(s)
- systematic, explicit, and transparent methods to identify, select, and critically appraise research
- may or may not use statistical methods (meta-analysis) for analyzing and summarizing the results.

### Essential Components of a PHIDS Literature Review

In PHIDS we use a systematic approach to literature reviews. This includes:

- A **Research Question** that clearly explains the purpose of the review;
- Explicit **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria** that specify the **Population, Intervention, Methods, and Outcomes** for the review;
- A pre-determined and replicable **Search Strategy**;
- A **Systematic Approach** to managing the searches, retrieving and storing documents, and applying inclusion/exclusion criteria;
- A predetermined **Coding Strategy** for gathering information from included articles;
- A predetermined approach to **Critically Appraising** the quality of included studies;
- A **Quantitative or Qualitative Summary** of the available literature;
- The creation of both **Executive and Full Reports** that include descriptions of the Background, Purpose, Methods, Results, Discussion of the available literature.

PHIDS staff, with support from Library Services, have the backgrounds and expertise to provide consultation to Population and Public Health staff interested in conducting literature reviews. If you would like to discuss your plans for a literature review, please contact [phids@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:phids@albertahealthservices.ca).

In addition, the following webpage at the Health Information Network Calgary provides additional resources for those beginning a literature review: <http://hinc.ucalgary.ca/?q=researchers>.