Developing a reporting guideline to improve meta-ethnography in health research: the eMERGe mixed-methods study

Maggie Cunningham,1 Emma F France,1* Nicola Ring,2 Isabelle Uny,1 Edward AS Duncan,1 Rachel J Roberts,1 Ruth G Jepson,3 Margaret Maxwell,1 Ruth L Turley4 and Jane Noyes5

1Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit, University of Stirling, Stirling, UK
2School of Health and Social Care, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, UK
3Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
4Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement (DECIPHer), School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK
5School of Social Sciences, Bangor University, Bangor, UK

*Corresponding author emma.france@stir.ac.uk

Declared competing interests of authors: Jane Noyes reports partial reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses to attend meetings to develop Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative Research (CERQual) from the World Health Organization, Alliance for Health Systems and Policy, Norad and Cochrane during the conduct of the study; reports partial reimbursement for travel expenses for co-chairing the Cochrane Methods Executive and membership of the Scientific Committee from Cochrane outside the submitted work; has two patents licensed for CERQual and the iCAT_SR tool, both of which were released under the Creative Commons License; and is a member of the National Institute for Health Research Dissemination Centre Advisory Group.

Published February 2019
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr07040

Plain English summary

The eMERGe mixed-methods study

Health Services and Delivery Research 2019; Vol. 7: No. 4
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr07040

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Plain English summary

Many research studies are carried out that ask people about their experiences; for example, the research may ask people what it is like to live with an illness or ask about their experience of healthcare or different types of treatment. When several studies have been carried out on the same research topic, it can be useful to pull the findings of those studies together and see whether or not more can be understood about the topic by looking at all the different findings and viewpoints in the studies. Meta-ethnography is an approach for helping researchers to pull together these types of studies. Before this project started, we had identified that a lot of research that used this approach did not include important information which could let the reader know how the research team had pulled the studies together and come up with their findings.

At that time, there were no guidelines about what information researchers should include in their reports when they had used this approach. During this study, we have developed guidance for how to report this research approach. We followed several steps to develop the guidance, including (1) gathering advice that other researchers had published about what should be reported; (2) checking what has been reported well and not so well in reports using this approach; (3) asking a wide range of people, including experts, users and patients, what they think should be included in reports that use this approach; and (4) pulling together all this information to produce the guidance and getting feedback on the guidance from a wide range of people. We hope that this guidance will help to improve the quality of meta-ethnography reporting. We have produced training materials, which are available at www.emergeproject.org (accessed 26 March 2018).

This plain English summary was developed in conjunction with two lay members of the Project Advisory Group, Geoff Allan and Ian Gallagher.
Criteria for inclusion in the Health Services and Delivery Research journal

Reports are published in Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HS&DR programme or programmes which preceded the HS&DR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

HS&DR programme

The Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) programme, part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), was established to fund a broad range of research. It combines the strengths and contributions of two previous NIHR research programmes: the Health Services Research (HSR) programme and the Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) programme, which were merged in January 2012.

The HS&DR programme aims to produce rigorous and relevant evidence on the quality, access and organisation of health services including costs and outcomes, as well as research on implementation. The programme will enhance the strategic focus on research that matters to the NHS and is keen to support ambitious evaluative research to improve health services.

For more information about the HS&DR programme please visit the website: http://www.nets.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/hsdr

This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 13/114/60. The contractual start date was in June 2015. The final report began editorial review in July 2017 and was accepted for publication in October 2017. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

© Queen’s Printer and Controller of HMSO 2019. This work was produced by Cunningham et al. under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This issue may be freely reproduced for the purposes of private research and study and extracts (or indeed, the full report) may be included in professional journals provided that suitable acknowledgement is made and the reproduction is not associated with any form of advertising. Applications for commercial reproduction should be addressed to: NIHR Journals Library, National Institute for Health Research, Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre, Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton SO16 7NS, UK.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).
NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

**Professor Ken Stein** Chair of HTA and EME Editorial Board and Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

**Professor Ken Stein** Chair of HTA and EME Editorial Board and Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

**Professor Andrée Le May** Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals)

**Professor Matthias Beck** Professor of Management, Cork University Business School, Department of Management and Marketing, University College Cork, Ireland

**Dr Tessa Crilly** Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

**Dr Eugenia Cronin** Senior Scientific Advisor, Wessex Institute, UK

**Dr Peter Davidson** Consultant Advisor, Wessex Institute, University of Southampton, UK

**Ms Tara Lamont** Scientific Advisor, NETSCC, UK

**Dr Catriona McDaid** Senior Research Fellow, York Trials Unit, Department of Health Sciences, University of York, UK

**Professor William McGuire** Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

**Professor Geoffrey Meads** Professor of Wellbeing Research, University of Winchester, UK

**Professor John Norrie** Chair in Medical Statistics, University of Edinburgh, UK

**Professor John Powell** Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK

**Professor James Raftery** Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

**Dr Rob Riemsma** Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

**Professor Helen Roberts** Professor of Child Health Research, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, UK

**Professor Jonathan Ross** Professor of Sexual Health and HIV, University Hospital Birmingham, UK

**Professor Helen Snooks** Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

**Professor Jim Thornton** Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK

**Professor Martin Underwood** Warwick Clinical Trials Unit, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Please visit the website for a list of editors: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk