

Throughout the year, this column's authors have addressed ideas and strategies that were suggested in the January column—The Future of Oncology Nursing Research: Research Priorities and Professional Development. The following article focuses on a method of critique that can be used by oncology nurses when assessing qualitative research findings for translation and application to clinical practice.

The Application of Qualitative Research Findings to Oncology Nursing Practice

Colleen Ann Cuthbert, MN, RN, NP-Adult, and Nancy Moules, RN, PhD

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) has established an ambitious research agenda and professional priorities based on a survey by LoBiondo-Wood et al. (2014). With the overall goal to “improve cancer care and the lives of individuals with cancer” (Moore & Badger, 2014, p. 93) through research activities, translating those research findings to direct clinical practice can be overwhelming. As clinicians, understanding how to critique research for quality prior to incorporating research findings into practice is important. The ultimate goal in this critique is to ensure that decisions made about patient care are based on strong evidence. However, the process for appraisal of qualitative research can be ambiguous and often contradictory as a result of the elusive aspect of quality in qualitative research methods (Seale, 1999). In addition, with more than 100 tools available to evaluate qualitative research studies (Higgins & Green, 2011), a lack of consensus exists on how to critically appraise research findings.

The purpose of this article is to outline the process of critiquing a qualitative research study using the Cochrane Collaboration Qualitative Methods Group (CCQMG) appraisal guide (Hannes, 2011). A critique of a research article of the experiences of palliative care patients and their caregivers, using the criteria of the CCQMG, will be presented. A founding principle of the Cochrane collaboration is to evaluate “outcomes that matter to people making choices in health care” (Cochrane Collaboration, 2013, p.n.p.), aligning this method of critique with the priorities of ONS.

Appraisal Process

The Cochrane Collaboration's primary work is to conduct systematic reviews of healthcare research to determine interventions that are most helpful for patients. The integration of qualitative evidence is considered a valuable approach to inform and enhance quantitative research (Cochrane Collaboration, 2013). The three stages in the CCQMG process include filtering, technical appraisal, and theoretical appraisal.

These three stages will be used to appraise the research article “Experiences of Rural Family Caregivers Who Assist With Commuting for Palliative Care” (Lockie, Bottorf, Robinson, & Pesut, 2010). This qualitative research was conducted as a part of a larger study of the needs of rural palliative care patients and their family caregivers. In this study, family caregivers of patients receiving treatment at a regional cancer center were interviewed for the purpose of understanding the experience of commuting to receive palliative care services (Lockie et al., 2010).

Filtering is used to determine whether or not an article is reporting on a qualitative research study. At a minimum, a qualitative research report should include a description of the sampling strategy, the data collection procedures, the data analysis, and the methodology. For novice reviewers, distinguishing between a qualitative research report and other types of descriptive articles is important.

Lockie et al. (2010) reported that they used a qualitative descriptive design and semistructured interviews with a

purposive sample of 15 participants. Their process of data analysis was independently conducted open coding in addition to using NVivo data management software. Based on this information, it was determined that they conducted and reported findings from a qualitative research study.

Technical Appraisal

The overall goal of the technical appraisal is to evaluate the rigor of the research process and the trustworthiness of the findings. The CCQMG has incorporated Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as core elements of this process. Examples of the technical appraisal from Lockie et al. (2010) are presented in Table 1.

Credibility refers to evaluating the fit between the data and the research findings (i.e., determining whether the findings are coherent and make sense) (Hannes, 2011; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewish, & Dillon, 2003). Lockie et al. (2010) presented quotes from the transcribed interview data. Of the seven quotes provided, only two of the excerpts substantiated the stated research findings. It was also difficult to appreciate how the findings were determined without a more detailed explanation of the data analysis process. As a result, lack of credibility of the findings exists as presented.

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