

Referencing Exemplar Handout

During term one I found myself inwardly questioning the reliability and validity of scientific journals, as I came across conflicting studies and contradictory data in our weekly research and feedback sessions. I was surprised at how other members of the group appeared to automatically trust the content of peer-reviewed journals and I sometimes felt that what was presented back to the group was accepted as factual as long as there was a reference attached. This prompted me to read into what I now realise is referred to as publication bias and has been widely documented in recent years. For example, Dawes (2005) argues that, although reputable journals adopt a robust peer review process, articles still get published with significant flaws: 'Journals have to publish to survive and they want to publish articles that deal with topical important issues of the day. Sometimes this imperative overrides the critical review process.' (Dawes, 2005) Furthermore, Brooks (1997) highlights the fact that statistical significance increases the likelihood of a researcher's work being published, which might tempt some researchers to tamper with the data. I did not want to appear cynical to the rest of the group and kept these concerns to myself, which on reflection I perhaps could have volunteered for discussion. Instead, I felt that in order to construct an accurate care plan at the end of each scenario I had to adopt a more robust approach in selecting appropriate journal texts. After these realisations, I found it more helpful to employ the use of meta-analyses and systematic reviews for assessing research. I found that using systematic reviews saved time searching through numerous journals, and I found the Cochrane Library a useful electronic information source.