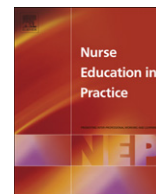


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Book review

How to do a Systematic Literature Review in Nursing. A Step-by-Step Guide, J. Bettany-Saltikov. Open University Press (2012). 173 p. Price: £18.99 approx, ISBN: 978-0-33-524227-6

The first edition of this book is a very welcome addition to the literature on systematic reviews. Within this text, Bettany-Saltikov has managed to de-mystify the systematic review methodology and convey to readers that it is possible for the novice reviewer to undertake such a review. Although students and practitioners of nursing are familiar with undertaking narrative or traditional literature reviews, systematic reviews have been depicted previously as somehow being outside the ability of students or practitioners of nursing who are undertaking academic courses of study. The book will be useful also for nurse lecturers who may be supervising students undertaking a systematic review as part of their dissertation. Moreover, whilst the title suggests the book is directed at nurses it has applicability to other healthcare professionals in a wide range of settings.

As the name of the book suggests the systematic review methodology is presented in a logical and step-wise fashion. This facilitates the novice reviewer by ensuring the process is broken into manageable and discrete parts. The introductory chapter situates/defines systematic reviews and presents an overview of the various types and their purpose. This chapter also discusses how a systematic review differs from the traditional, narrative review as well as situating them within evidence-based nursing practice and the medical hierarchy of evidence. The remaining 8 chapters essentially mirror the process of conducting a systematic review and focus on the review question, writing a plan, specifying objectives, inclusion and exclusion criteria, conducting a comprehensive and

systematic literature search, selecting, appraising and extracting data, synthesising, summarising and presenting the findings, discussing and completing the review and sharing and dissemination.

Each chapter presents numerous worked examples, which bring the process alive and make it more meaningful for the reader. In addition, the author offers a number of blank templates that a reviewer might use. Tables, boxes and figures are used throughout to illustrate the process and this strategy enhances the meaning of the text. Each chapter concludes with key points from the chapter and they provide an excellent summary.

This book is an essential entry text for any student or practitioner of nursing who wants to learn about or is considering undertaking a systematic review. The author is clear that many of the methods explored throughout the text are aimed at the novice reviewer. Therefore, more specialist synthesis techniques such as meta-analysis and meta-synthesis are not addressed in any depth. However, this is considered a strength rather than a limitation because in attempting to delineate specialist techniques such as meta-analysis and meta-synthesis the tone of the book may have been altered and the focus on the novice reviewer lost. Moreover, because of the clarity with which each stage of the process is presented it is likely that novice reviewers will move on to more specialist texts with the necessary underpinning, knowledge and understanding. This text should inspire confidence in novice reviewers about their ability to conduct a systematic review.

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