

PCORI Methodology Standards in Practice: Use of systematic reviews to support proposals for new research (Arial, size 10, bold font, left aligned)

Authors (Arial, size 10 font. Surname, Initial. Presenting author to be in bold and italics. Affiliations numbered in superscript. Centered) e.g.

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Oral and poster abstract text (Arial, size 10 font, left aligned, maximum 250 words)

Word Count: 250

Background

To ensure value when biomedical research priorities are set, authors of the 2014 Lancet series recommended that research funders require that proposals for primary research be justified by systematic reviews of existing evidence. The Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Methodology Standard RQ-1 requires applicants seeking funding at PCORI to cite an evidence gap identified in a systematic review in support of their proposal.

Objectives

To assess applicant adherence to PCORI Methodology Standard RQ-1.

Method

All PCORI Pragmatic Clinical Studies (PCS) research proposals that completed a review cycle between August 2014 and September 2017 were reviewed. Two reviewers identified citations of systematic reviews. Reviewers assigned a purpose to each citation: background/significance, evidence gap and/or study design.

Results

Among 99 applications, 94 (95%) cited at least one systematic review. There was no apparent difference in citations between funded and unfunded applications. The mean number of systematic reviews cited was 5 and the range was 0-26. Sixty-seven applications cited a systematic review for the purpose of justifying an evidence gap. Researchers also cited systematic reviews to inform their study design (N=57), or to provide background information on research topic significance (N=80).

Limitations

We did not assess all types of applications for funding; nor did we assess goodness of fit between the systematic review and purpose for citation, or the quality of the cited systematic reviews.

Conclusions

The majority of applicants to the PCS funding announcement adhere to PCORI Methodology Standard RQ-1; nonetheless, opportunities to further assess and to improve practice remain.