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## ■ Qualitative research review guidelines – RATS

ASK THIS OF THE MANUSCRIPT	THIS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE MANUSCRIPT
<p><b>R Relevance of study question</b></p> <p>Is the research question interesting?</p> <p>Is the research question relevant to clinical practice, public health, or policy?</p>	<p>Research question explicitly stated ✓</p> <p>Research question justified and linked to the existing knowledge base (empirical research, theory, policy) ✓</p>
<p><b>A Appropriateness of qualitative method</b></p> <p>Is qualitative methodology the best approach for the study aims?</p> <p><i>Interviews:</i> experience, perceptions, behaviour, practice, process</p> <p><i>Focus groups:</i> group dynamics, convenience, non-sensitive topics</p> <p><i>Ethnography:</i> culture, organizational behaviour, interaction</p> <p><i>Textual analysis:</i> documents, art, representations, conversations</p>	<p>Study design described and justified e.g., why was a particular method (i.e., interviews) chosen? ✓</p>
<p><b>T Transparency of procedures</b></p> <p><i>Sampling</i></p> <p>Are the participants selected the most appropriate to provide access to type of knowledge sought by the study?</p> <p>Is the sampling strategy appropriate?</p>	<p>Criteria for selecting the study sample justified and explained ✓</p> <p><i>theoretical:</i> based on pre conceived or emergent theory</p> <p><i>purposive:</i> diversity of opinion</p> <p><i>volunteer:</i> feasibility, hard-to-reach groups</p>
<p><i>Recruitment</i></p> <p>Was recruitment conducted using appropriate methods?</p> <p>Is the sampling strategy appropriate?</p> <p>Could there be selection bias?</p>	<p>Details of how recruitment was conducted and by whom ✓</p> <p>Details of who chose not to participate and why ✓</p>
<p><i>Data collection</i></p> <p>Was collection of data systematic and comprehensive?</p> <p>Are characteristics of the study group and setting clear?</p> <p>Why and when was data collection stopped, and is this reasonable?</p>	<p>Method (s) outlined and examples given (e.g., interview questions) ✓</p> <p>Study group and setting clearly described ✓</p> <p>End of data collection justified and described ✓</p>
<p><i>Role of researchers</i></p> <p>Is the researcher (s) appropriate? How might they bias (good and bad) the conduct of the study and results?</p>	<p>Do the researchers occupy dual roles (clinician and researcher)? ✓</p> <p>Are the ethics of this discussed? Do the researcher(s) critically examine their own ✓</p>

	influence on the formulation of the research question, data collection, and interpretation?
<p><i>Ethics</i></p> <p>Was informed consent sought and granted?</p> <p>Were participants' anonymity and confidentiality ensured?</p> <p>Was approval from an appropriate ethics committee received?</p>	<p>Informed consent process explicitly and clearly detailed ✓</p> <p>Anonymity and confidentiality discussed ✓</p> <p>Ethics approval cited ✓</p>
<p><b>S Soundness of interpretive approach</b></p> <p><i>Analysis</i></p> <p>Is the type of analysis appropriate for the type of study? <i>thematic: exploratory, descriptive, hypothesis generating framework: e.g., policy constant comparison/grounded theory: theory generating, analytical</i></p> <p>Are the interpretations clearly presented and adequately supported by the evidence?</p> <p>Are quotes used and are these appropriate and effective?</p> <p>Was trustworthiness/reliability of the data and interpretations checked?</p>	<p>Analytic approach described in depth and justified ✓</p> <p><i>Indicators of quality: Description of how themes were derived from the data (inductive or deductive)</i> ✓</p> <p>Evidence of alternative explanations being sought ✓</p> <p>Analysis and presentation of negative or deviant cases ✓</p> <p>Description of the basis on which quotes were chosen ✓</p> <p>Semi-quantification when appropriate ✓</p> <p>Illumination of context and/or meaning, richly detailed ✓</p> <p>Method of reliability check described and justified ✓ e.g., was an audit trail, triangulation, or member checking employed? Did an independent analyst review data and contest themes? How were disagreements resolved?</p>
<p><i>Discussion and presentation</i></p> <p>Are findings sufficiently grounded in a theoretical or conceptual framework?</p> <p>Is adequate account taken of previous knowledge and how the findings add?</p> <p>Are the limitations thoughtfully considered?</p> <p>Is the manuscript well written and accessible?</p>	<p>Findings presented with reference to existing theoretical and empirical literature, and how they contribute ✓</p> <p>Strengths and limitations explicitly described and discussed ✓</p> <p>Evidence of following guidelines (format, word count) ✓</p> <p>Detail of methods or additional quotes contained in appendix ✓</p> <p>Written for a health sciences audience</p>
<p>Are <u>red flags</u> present? these are common features of ill conceived or poorly executed qualitative studies, are a cause for concern, and must be viewed critically. They might be</p>	<p><i>Grounded theory: not a simple content analysis but a complex, sociological, theory generating approach</i>Jargon: descriptions that are trite, pat,</p>

fatal flaws, or they may result from lack of detail or clarity.

or jargon filled should be viewed sceptically  
*Over interpretation:* interpretation must be grounded in "accounts" and semi-quantified if possible or appropriate  
*Seems anecdotal, self evident:* may be a superficial analysis, not rooted in conceptual framework or linked to previous knowledge, and lacking depth  
*Consent process thinly discussed:* may not have met ethics requirements  
*Doctor-researcher:* consider the ethical implications for patients and the bias in data collection and interpretation

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