

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below. Some articles will have been accepted based in part or entirely on reviews undertaken for other BMJ Group journals. These will be reproduced where possible.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Quality Improvement Strategies to Optimize Transition of Heart Failure Patients to Independent Living: Protocol for a scoping review
AUTHORS	Kastner, Monika; Lillie, Erin; Ashoor, Huda; Perrier, Laure; Cardoso, Roberta; Straus, Sharon; Lee, Douglas

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Judith Hupcey Penn State University United States
REVIEW RETURNED	30-Sep-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This manuscripts presents a plan for a scoping review. The plan appears complete, but not sure of its utility to readers, unless someone is looking for a methodolgy paper. A concern is the authors will use a proprietary online systematic review software that is only available at their institution, so not sure how helpful this would be to others.</p> <p>This is a well thought out place for a scoping review, but would be helpful to know how many articles exist that meet the strict inclusion/exclusion criteria and the expertise of the reviewers.</p>
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REVIEWER	Kelly Stamp Boston College, William F. Connell School of Nursing United States of America
REVIEW RETURNED	07-Oct-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>The statement of the objectives need to be re-considered (page 5, line 32). The first sentence states, " the objectives of our study are to systematically review the literature for....". I believe using the terminology of systemically reviewing the literature is confusing in a scoping study. Is it the authors' intention to perform a preliminary mapping of the literature for RCTs and systemic reviews to determine which QI strategies aimed at...? If so, please clearly articulate.</p> <p>The abstract is accurate and balanced, but again consider re-wording the sentence in the first paragraph (line 22) that states the authors' main objective is to systematically review the literature. The authors' are performing a scoping review study, which needs to be clear to the readers.</p> <p>On page 3, the authors should describe more of the limitations as it relates to a scoping review.</p>
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	This is a well written protocol and it is clear that the authors took a great deal of time to describe their work and cite it appropriately. A few minor changes to enhance clarity are needed. I appreciate the opportunity to participate the peer-review process.
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1:

1. This manuscript presents a plan for a scoping review. The plan appears complete, but not sure of its utility to readers, unless someone is looking for a methodology paper.

Our response:

This paper represents our protocol for a scoping review investigating quality improvement strategies to optimize transition of patients from the hospital to independent living. Little is known about which QI interventions exist for early events of HF after discharge, so we will determine which QI strategies are effective for reducing hospital readmissions and mortality for HF patients who transition from the hospital back into independent living.

2. A concern is the authors will use a proprietary online systematic review software that is only available at their institution, so not sure how helpful this would be to others.

Our response:

The software we will use (i.e., “synthesis.r”) was developed by our unit aimed at automating the process of article selection, discrepancy resolution, and data management in systematic reviews. It will be used primarily as an aid to facilitate screening for articles amongst our reviewer team. It is a more automated means of screening for articles than for example using Excel.

3. This is a well thought out place for a scoping review, but would be helpful to know how many articles exist that meet the strict inclusion/exclusion criteria and the expertise of the reviewers.

Our response:

Our preliminary search strategy yielded 5661 articles. We included this search strategy and eligibility criteria as Appendices. In terms of the expertise of the team, the first author has conducted over 15 systematic reviews, and our unit has a systematic review center where we have conducted over 200 systematic reviews. Our reviewers have access to this unit, where we use a systematic approach to conducting reviews as outlined in our methods, including the calibration of our reviewers to ensure reliability of screening and articles selection, as well as data abstraction and other components of the review process.

Reviewer 2:

1. The statement of the objectives need to be re-considered (page 5, line 32). The first sentence states, " the objectives of our study are to systematically review the literature for....". I believe using the terminology of systemically reviewing the literature is confusing in a scoping study. Is it the authors' intention to perform a preliminary mapping of the literature for RCTs and systemic reviews to determine which QI strategies aimed at...? If so, please clearly articulate.

Our response:

We corrected this, so our objectives now clearly state that we are conducting a scoping review.

2. The abstract is accurate and balanced, but again consider re-wording the sentence in the first paragraph (line 22) that states the authors' main objective is to systematically review the literature. The authors' are performing a scoping review study, which needs to be clear to the readers.

Our response:

We corrected this in the abstract as well, to indicate that we are conducting a scoping review.

3. On page 3, the authors should describe more of the limitations as it relates to a scoping review.

Our response:

We included the description of a limitation of scoping reviews on Page 3 of the manuscript: " A limitation of scoping reviews is that the assessment of risk of bias is not part of its conduct since its goal is to provide an overview of the literature regardless of methodological quality".

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Kelly Stamp Boston College, William F. Connell School of Nursing United States of America
REVIEW RETURNED	05-Nov-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	The authors adequately addressed all of my comments from the first review. I have no further changes.
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