Finding Quality Improvement Literature

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Below is a brief guide to finding literature to support and inform QI projects.

Identify your topic

- What is the nature and significance of the problem you are trying to solve?
- What is the rationale for your intervention? Why was it chosen, expected to work, be sustainable and replicable?[1]
- Consider the context and the current moment. For example: COVID-19, or racism and health disparities/inequities. How might your project be impacted by or address these timely issues?

[1] Ogrinc G, Davies L, Goodman D, Batalden P, Davidoff F, Stevens D. **SQUIRE 2.0 (Standards for QUality Improvement Reporting Excellence): revised publication guidelines from a detailed consensus process**. *BMJ Qual Saf*. 2016;25(12):986-992. doi:10.1136/bmjqs-2015-004411. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26369893/

Searching for Evidence/Literature

Don't just dive in. Give it some thought before you start your search. Your QI project should have a logical narrative.

⟹ What are you searching for? Latest developments, statistics, examples of projects?
⟹ Find background information – Why does this issue/problem matter?
⟹ Look for key studies on effectiveness, outcomes, cost analysis. (Hint: check top/key journals).
⟹ Find case studies of QI interventions addressing your problem, in your population. Can't find an exact match? Consider articles outlining a similar intervention for a different problem or population.

Search Tips for Finding QI Literature

PubMed

The first place you should start is PubMed (or Ovid Medline). A good quality PubMed literature search will use a combination of keywords and MeSH (medical subject heading) terms. Here are some that are useful when trying to track down QI literature:

Keywords

quality OR *improve* OR *improvement* OR *intervention* OR *enhance* OR *initiative* OR *project* OR *compliance* OR *evaluation* OR *measurement* OR *increase* OR *strategy* OR *program* OR *CQI* OR *QI*

MeSH Terms
- Quality Improvement was introduced as a MeSH term in 2011.
- Other MeSH Terms to consider:
    - Quality of Health Care
    - Quality Assurance, Health Care
    - Quality Indicators, Health Care
    - Health Plan Implementation
    - Quality Control
    - Total Quality Management

PubMed MeSH QI strategy:
"Quality Improvement"[mesh] OR "Quality of Health Care"[mesh] OR "Quality Assurance, Health Care"[mesh] OR "Quality Indicators, Health Care"[mesh] OR "Health Plan Implementation"[mesh] OR "Quality Control"[mesh] OR "Total Quality Management"[mesh]

Ovid MeSH search QI strategy:
"Quality Improvement"/ or "Quality of Health Care"/ or "Quality Assurance, Health Care"/ or "Quality Indicators, Health Care"/ or "Health Plan Implementation"/ or "Quality Control"/ or "Total Quality Management"/

Already thinking about specific strategies? Consider adding select terms to your search. For example
- EHR or electronic health record
- Patient education
- Reminders
- Root Cause Analysis

Too many results? Use **filters to limit by year or article type**.

How PubMed Works: Tips & Tricks
- Keywords, phrases, and terms entered in the search box are matched against a subject translation table (including MeSH) this is known as automatic term mapping (ATM).
- If a match is found, the term will be searched as MeSH: For example, **quality improvement:** "quality improvement"[MeSH Terms] OR ("quality"[All Fields] AND "improvement"[All Fields]) OR "quality improvement"[All Fields]
- If a match is not found, PubMed breaks apart the phrase and repeats the ATM process until a match is found and individual terms will be combined.
- To see how your terms are translated, check the search details available in Advanced Search.
- Many phrases are recognized by the ATM process. However, you can bypass ATM and search for a specific phrase using quotation marks: "quality improvement". If a phrase is not found, the quotes will be ignored, and terms will be processed using ATM.

- You can also use search tags such as finding the phrase or terms in the title or abstract: quality improvement[ti] OR quality improvement[tiab].

Need a refresher on searching PubMed? Here's a tutorial: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/help/

Consider trying the **Health Services Research (HSR) PubMed Queries** page. This page provides specialized PubMed searches on healthcare quality and costs. https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nichsr/hedges/search.html

 You can also try the **EBSCO Health Business Elite** database as it provides comprehensive journal content detailing all aspects of health care administration and other non-clinical aspects of health care institution management.

Grey Literature
Rather than being published as journal articles, QI projects may be presented as conference abstracts, in government or NGO reports, or on institutional websites. This is what we refer to as "grey literature".

You can find a lot of grey literature by searching Google/Google Scholar.

Keep in mind that Google Scholar uses a relevancy ranking, so the most frequently cited journal articles will be at the top and conference abstracts and other grey literature sources may get buried deep in the results. You may need to add more terms to your search to try to get as specific as possible.

For more tips on finding grey literature: https://guides.dml.georgetown.edu/greylit/resources

Other places to search for QI literature and case studies

- Providence Digital Commons https://digitalcommons.psjhealth.org/
  - Oregon Academic Achievement (Past Resident Projects): https://digitalcommons.psjhealth.org/Oregon_academic_achievement/
- AHRQ Innovation Exchange https://innovations.ahrq.gov/
- Patient Safety Innovations Exchange: https://www.psnet.ahrq.gov/innovations-exchange
- Institute for Healthcare Improvement http://www.ihi.org/
- National Information Center on Health Services Research & Health Care Technology (NICHSR) Health Services Research & Public Health Information Programs https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hsrph.html

Still having trouble? Ask your Librarian!

Visit www.providence.org/library or email librarian@providence.org
You can also visit the Library Learning Portal to access "How To" videos and additional resources.

Want to delve deeper?

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Hempel S, Rubenstein LV, Shanman RM, et al**. Identifying quality improvement intervention publications--a comparison of electronic search strategies**. *Implement Sci*. 2011;6:85. Published 2011 Aug 1. doi:10.1186/1748-5908-6-85
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Jones E, Furnival J, Carter W. **Identifying and resolving the frustrations of reviewing the improvement literature: The experiences of two improvement researchers.** *BMJ Open Qual*. 2019;8(3):e000701. Published 2019 Jul 24. doi:10.1136/bmjoq-2019-000701
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