

Terms Commonly Used in Evidence Based Practice

Anecdotal – Information based on casual observations or indications rather than rigorous or scientific analysis. (CEBC)

Bias - This is the tendency of some (poor) study designs systematically to produce results that are better (rarely if ever worse) than those with a robust design. (Bandolier).

Case-control study – Compares people with a disease or condition ('cases') to another group of people from the same population who don't have that disease or condition ('controls'). A case-control study can identify risks and trends, and suggest some possible causes for disease, or for particular outcomes. For example, a study could compare 4th graders with ADHD to a group of 4th graders without ADHD. (CEBC)

Empirical research – Research conducted 'in the field', where data are gathered first-hand and/or through observation. Case studies and surveys are examples of empirical research. (CEBC)

External validity – External validity is the extent to which the results of a study can apply to people other than the ones that were in the study. This is a measure of how generalizable the results are to others outside of the study. (CEBC)

Internal validity – Internal validity is the extent to which a study properly measures what it is meant to. (CEBC)

Meta-analysis – A statistical technique which summarizes the results of several studies into a single estimate of their combined result. It is a key element of many systematic reviews. (CEBC)

Peer review – A refereeing process used to check the quality and importance of research studies. It aims to provide a wider check on the quality and interpretation of a report. For example, an article submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal is reviewed by other experts in the field. (CEBC)

Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) – In a randomized controlled trial, participants are randomly assigned to receive either an intervention or control treatment (often usual care services). This allows the effect of the intervention can be studied in groups of people who are: (1) the same at the outset and (2) treated the same way, except for the intervention(s) being studied. Any differences seen in the groups at the end can be attributed to the difference in treatment alone, and not to bias or chance. (CEBC)

Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) – It is a tool for getting available research evidence as comprehensively as possible, within the constraints of a given timetable. It differs from a full systematic review because it focuses on published research only and

uses fewer criteria on which to evaluate the rigor and quality of research. These types of assessments can be completed in six months or less. (adapted from GSR)

Reliability – The extent to which the same result will be achieved when repeating the same measure or study again. For example, someone completing the same assessment tool twice within a short period of time should get roughly the same result if the tool is reliable. (CEBC)

Systematic review - A summary of the literature that uses explicit methods to perform a thorough literature search and critical appraisal of individual studies and that uses appropriate statistical techniques to combine these valid studies. Systematic reviews are not all equal, and quality issues are important. (Adapted from Bandolier)

Validity – The degree to which a result is likely to be true and free of bias. There are two types of validity: (CEBC)

Bandolier – Retrieved from <http://www.jr2.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/booth/diagnos/glossary.html>

CEBC = California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare
Retrieved from: <http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org/glossary>

GSR = Government Social Research
Retrieved from: http://www.gsr.gov.uk/ne_research/archive/rae.asp