Mediterranean Journal of Rheumatology

How can I appraise and read correctly a (narrative) review article?

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- Why should I read review articles in the first place?

- Are review articles useful?
  - To the medical / scientific community
  - To myself as a clinician / scientist

- How can I choose the most relevant review article to what I am looking for?

- How can I distinguish a "good" review from a "bad" review article?

- Getting on with the reading – can I distil already distilled knowledge even more?

- Summary: getting the most out of reading a review

Why should I read review articles in the first place?

Review articles analyse critically and summarise the overwhelming amounts of primary research published in a(ny) field.

- To gain knowledge in a field I don't know well

- To understand better a field that I know reasonably well

- To get distilled knowledge from international experts in a field

- To get an idea of how to write good review article myself

- To guide myself in a field of research / enquiry

- … … …

Are review articles useful – to the medical scientific community?

- Quality review articles **compile**, **summarise**, **critique** and **synthesise** information on a topic available from primary research

- As such, they can form the basis for:
  - Knowledge development
    - Clarify current state of knowledge
    - Explain apparent contradictions
    - Create consensus where none existed before

  - Creation of practice or policy guidelines

  - Provision of evidence for an application (e.g. therapy)

  - Identification of research gaps in the field

  - Generation of new ideas and research directions

Are review articles useful – to myself as a clinician / scientist?

- All of the above (since I am a member of the community)

- Best source of "quick" quality knowledge

- Best start for my PhD dissertation

- A good first publication
  - Usually highly cited
    - i.e. good for my career

- … … …

How can I choose the most relevant review article to what I am looking for?

- Be specific when searching (MESH), e.g.
  - RA
    - Treatment
      - Biologics
        - JAKi
          - Cardiovascular
            - VTE

- Get several and screen them for relevance (NOT from the abstract)

- Go for specialised journals (if available)

How can I distinguish a "good" review from a "less good" review article?

- Go for the latest (but don't ignore older ones)

- The source journal **may be** an indicator (but not sufficient in itself)
  - Specialised review journals (e.g. Nature Reviews Rheumatology; Ann Reviews in …)
  - Top medical journals (e.g. NEJM, The Lancet, others)

- The authors **may be** an indicator (but not sufficient in itself)

- There are guidelines for writing a good review (Armen Gasparyan): have they been followed?

- Check the references: too many from the authors? (consider bias)

- Go back to the original purpose of review articles – are they all covered?

    compile, summarise, <u>critique</u>, <u>synthesise</u>

Getting on with the reading – can I distil already distilled knowledge even more?

- Have written down the main aspects you want to get out of the review (the MUSTS)

- Read the whole paper (much more likely with reviews than with original papers)

- Keep notes or highlights
  - Of the MUSTS
  - Of other aspects you found interesting and hadn't thought of

- If there are still gaps, search for more review articles or more specifically

- Keep a note of how you would have done it better

Summary: getting the most out of reading a review

- Get to the habit of reading reviews – it's a very good habit!!!

- Find the most relevant review(s) for what you want / need

- Find the best reviews for what you want / need

- Read the whole paper and keep notes

- **Write and publish a review article yourself – you will appreciate even more the work of others**