

SWAR 02: Effects of reading a written summary or listening to a summary podcast on knowledge and understanding of the findings of a systematic review

Objective of this SWAR

To explore whether readers can understand key messages without having to read the full review, and if there are differences in understanding between various types of summary.

Study area: Dissemination

Sample type: Consumers

Estimated funding level needed: Unfunded

Background

Many readers of systematic reviews will only access the findings of the review through one of the various summaries available rather than the full review. Therefore, it is essential that these summaries are clear, understandable and accessible. Cochrane Reviews provide three different types of summary: a scientific abstract, a plain language summary and for some reviews, an audio podcast. If readers are interacting with reviews in this way, it is important to discover if key outcomes can be understood without having to read the full review and if there are differences in understanding between various types of summary.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Reading the abstract of the review.

Intervention 2: Reading the plain language summary of the review.

Intervention 3: Reading the script for the podcast of the review.

Intervention 4: Listening to the podcast of the review.

Index Type:

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation

Outcome measures

Primary: Identification of the key findings of the review. Timing of the post-test measurement might vary, for example, understanding could be assessed immediately after reading the summary or at a later time point to see if the knowledge is retained.

Secondary: Influence of the person's prior knowledge on their identification of the key findings of the review, changes in opinion after accessing the summary, and interest in reading the full review after accessing the summary (and any change in this from before the summary).

Analysis plans

The analyses assess the effects of the summary on the understanding of the key findings of the review. This includes the answers to before and after questions about the person's knowledge or opinion on the findings and their desire to read the full review.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAR

The content of the review, key findings and the ease or difficulty of understanding these will vary across different implementations of this SWAR, because different systematic reviews will be used. Other possible problems are prior knowledge of the subject area and difficulties with accessing the audio podcast.

References

Publications or presentations of this SWAR design

Maguire L, Clarke M, Tully M. Reading or listening to review summaries - which method will produce greater understanding of the key outcomes in a Cochrane Review? *Trials* 2015; 16 (Suppl 2): O2.

Maguire L. Presenting the results of reviews. *Journal of Evidence-Based Medicine* 2015; 8(3): 171.

Maguire L, Clarke M. The communication of systematic review research findings: a randomised experiment of whether readers can understand the key messages from summaries of Cochrane reviews without reading the full review. *Lancet* 2014; 384 (Special issue 2): S48.

Maguire L, Clarke M. How much do you need: a randomised experiment of whether readers can understand the key messages from summaries of Cochrane Reviews, without reading the full review? *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 2014; 104(11): 444-9.

Examples of the implementation of this SWAR

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