





COVID-19 pandemic and the quality of evidence synthesis

Editor

The COVIDSurg Collaborative group¹ present a scoping review and survey aimed to identify key domains in developing pandemic preparedness plans for surgical services and provide practice recommendations. A scoping study is a form of knowledge synthesis that addresses an exploratory research question, applies a well described methodology, and is conducted in accordance with well-defined scientific standards to ensure synthesis and analytical interpretation. We noticed that the review may not comply with all aspects of PRISMA-ScR and COREQ standards for reporting of scoping reviews and qualitative research, respectively^{2,3}. Furthermore, established methods for producing rapid recommendations developed by the Guidelines International Network may not have been considered⁴. Identification of interviewees from social media may introduce selection bias, and the content of the survey used may not have been disclosed. Practice recommendations could have been developed against the stringent criteria summarized by the GRADE methodology⁵. Is it possible all of this was overlooked given the urgency of the pandemic crisis? Notably, the review was submitted on 27 March

2020 and accepted for publication on 30 March 2020. We appreciate that there is pressure and an urgent need for prompt production of a global guidance but it should not be done at the cost of quality. We recommend that fundamental scientific principles in conducting evidence synthesis be adhered to. Since we acknowledge the importance of this work, we would be grateful if the authors could provide further information on the methodology and reporting of their review as outlined in this correspondence.

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