Effective Use of Digital Tools and CAQDAS Software in Qualitative Evidence Synthesis and Systematic Reviews: Practical Approaches and Recommendations

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This paper focusses on practical steps to effectively harnessing digital tools and using market-leading Computer Assisted Qualitative Analysis Software (CAQDAS) packages to undertake systematic reviews and synthesise qualitative and mixed-methods research. With their foundations in the health sciences the gold-standard Cochrane methods have an increasing influence on other social science disciplines: especially educational and management research. The workshop is framed by the recently published Cochrane Collaboration Guidance for Qualitative Evidence Synthesis (Cargo et al., 2018; Flemming, Booth, Hannes, Cargo, & Noyes, 2018; Harden et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2018; Noyes, Booth, Cargo, et al., 2018; Noyes, Booth, Flemming, et al., 2018) which will form the basis of the forthcoming Cochrane Handbook.

Through an exploration of the authors’ practical experience in supporting the use of both ATLAS.ti and NVivo in systematic reviews, the workshop explores:

• core principles of systematic reviews,
• the place of CAQDAS and other digital tools in the workflow of a review,
• using software for screening, quality analysis and synthesis,
• creating and implementing analysis frameworks through coding hierarchies (including the provision of example coding frameworks for import and use)
• using queries and memos to develop analysis
• exporting and reporting findings.

A particular focus is on ways to move beyond categorical coding and into relational explorations of the influences and developments of different studies through exploring how coded segments can be linked together using of hyperlinks (in ATLAS.ti) vs see also links (in NVivo).

The presentation also seeks to propose pragmatic approaches for the assessment and selection of the best-fit tools for a review, rather than these being grounded in familiarity or institutional licensing arrangements. Finally, drawing on a current project to support an exploratory systematic evidence mapping in environmental science, the future landscape and potential for the new generation of automated and pattern-coding tools in CAQDAS software will be considered.

Keywords: Systematic Reviews, Qualitative Evidence Synthesis, Cochrane Handbook, CAQDAS, ATLAS.ti, NVivo

References


