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The Medical Student Systematic Review Group at Cambridge University.

Chloe Edmonds, Joyel George, Victorious Olamona,
4th Year Medical Student

Priya Kalairajah,
5th Year Medical Student

Isla Kuhn, Cambridge Biomedical Campus Library & Knowledge Hub

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Background & format

Isla Kuhn

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Background

Systematic reviews are key component of evidence based healthcare

- Time consuming
- Complex set of skills required to deliver

Medical students are ambitious and capable

- Value getting extra skills
- Value getting a publication to support speciality applications
- Getting to join a research team can be challenging

Medical Student Systematic Review Group

- To provide medical students with basic training in SR methods
- To link interested students with researchers who are planning/doing SRS, to provide them with opportunities to contribute, be co-authors and present
- To provide an opportunity for students doing SRs to share knowledge, skills and experience

Format

- Team of teachers

- Experienced researchers from Dept Public Health & Primary Care, plus librarian
- skills in SR process, qualitative and quantitative analysis, RoB
- Student from previous cohort

- Original team:

- Becky Dennison, Prof Simon Griffith, Dr Hannah Harrison, Dr Becky Jones, Dr Sarah Kelly, Isla Kuhn, Dr Juliet Usher-Smith

- Current team

- Dr Becky Dennison, Prof Simon Griffith, Dr Hannah Harrison, Isla Kuhn, Izzy Mitchell, Dr Elena Raffetti, Lily Taylor

Format

- 6 session format – 1hr each, 2 sessions per week, late afternoon slot
- some pre-session preparation required*
- as interactive as possible

Session	Content
1	Introduction to SRs; and developing a research question
2	Searching the literature
3	Screening papers for inclusion*
4	Extracting and synthesising qualitative data*
5	Extracting and synthesising quantitative data
6	Assessing risk of bias; and writing a paper*

Progress

- Running since 2018:
 - o 8 cohorts
- c.70 students per cohort, mostly year 4 students
- 100 publications since inception
- 130 research groups

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
publications	17	19	29	9	7	17	2
research projects	22	28	15	17	12	16	20



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Why did you sign up? What did you hope to gain?

Chloe Edmonds

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Chloe

- To get practical training so I could contribute confidently to real systematic reviews alongside clinical placements
- Envisioning what the whole process looked like from start to finish, to be able to participate in and lead research
- I wanted to learn about how to research effectively so I can lead research by myself in the future. I wanted to understand the different steps in a systematic review and be able to practice with like-minded people
- I joined the systematic review group to contribute to the evidence base of clinical practice and to become comfortable with the methodology required to produce high-quality research



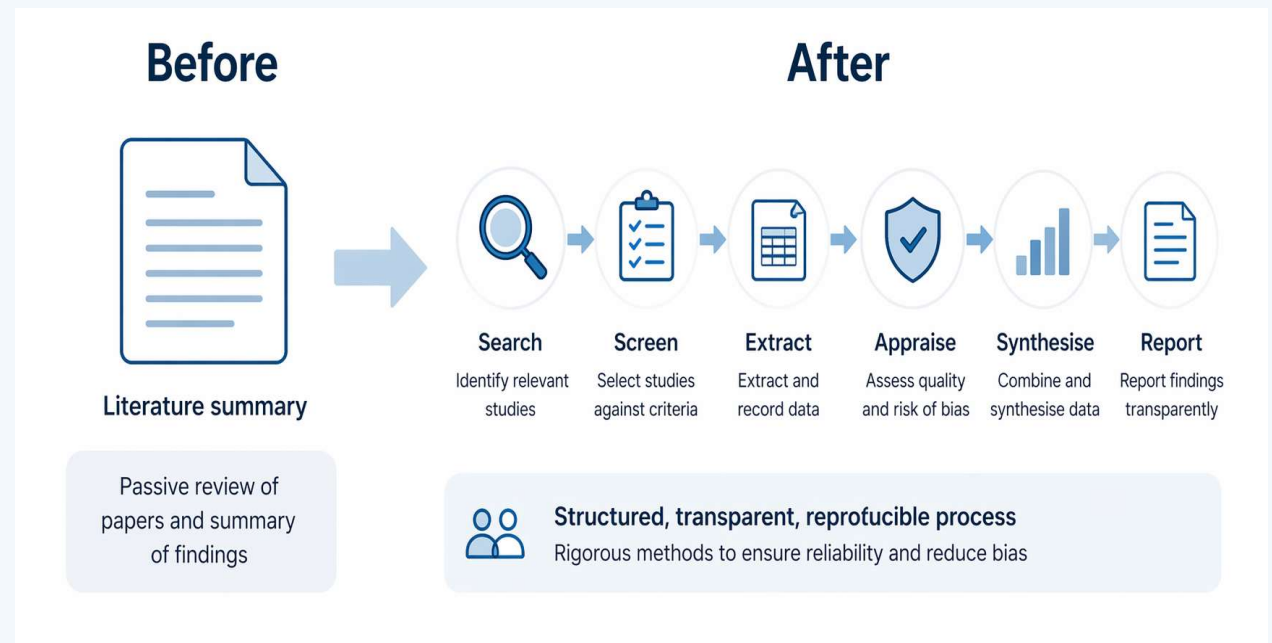
What were the biggest learning points? The biggest step change in your understanding?

Victorious Olamona

Learning points - Victorious

Key Learning points

- Systematic reviews are **highly structured and methodical**
- Each stage requires **careful decisions** to ensure quality and transparency
- Collaboration and duplicate review help reduce bias



The biggest shift in my understanding was realising that a systematic review is not just a literature summary, but a rigorous research method requiring transparent, justified and reproducible decision throughout.



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What did you contribute to the projects you joined?

Priya Kalairajah

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Students' contribution to research projects:

Literature identification

- Developing search strategies
- Screening studies for inclusion

Data synthesis

- Data extraction from included studies

Critical evaluation

- Risk-of-bias assessment
- Critical appraisal of study quality

Building new reviews

- Developing research questions and search strategies for new projects



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What were the challenges (if any)?

Victorious Olamona

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Challenges - Victorious



Balancing time and learning

to be comfortable with the uncertainty and rigour of the process.



Understanding the nuances

of each stage, to make the process as efficient as possible.



Adapting my style in screening

to be very particular in what you accept and reject.



Managing decision fatigue

while justifying every exclusion.



Resolving conflicts of opinion

that emerged during the unblinding of the screening stage.





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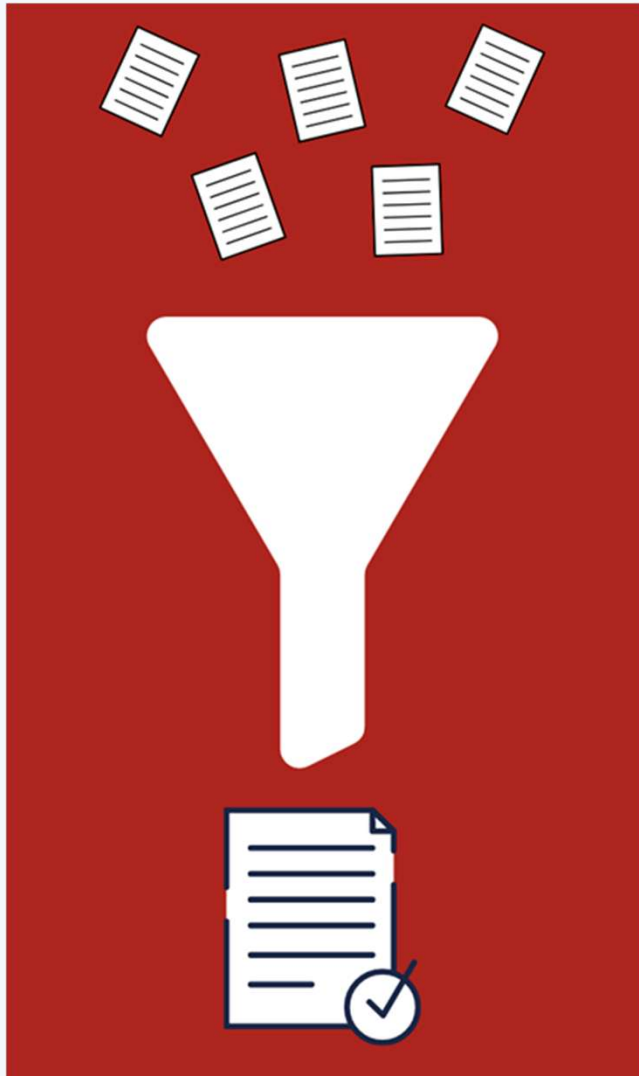
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What have you done with this new skillset since?

Joyel George

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Practical Application

- Applied the teaching practically to a systematic review
- Progressed through all stages of the systematic review process and currently preparing a manuscript for publication

Collaboration & Initiative

- Actively sought opportunities beyond the formal programme and contributed to additional systematic reviews independently

Future Developments

- Intending to collaborate with peers on setting up an external systematic review
- Continuing to build expertise in research and publication



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Thank you

Any questions?

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