



# Qualitative Research in General Practice: The Need for Specific Quality Standards for Reporting Qualitative Studies

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# Outline

- Our project in the EBM context
- Our objective
- The way we approach it
- Results and analysis
- Key messages and points for discussion

# Introduction

## ➤ 3 Facts

- Since 2015, the number of qualitative studies in GP has increased
  - To better understand the context of research questions
  - To better grasp stakeholders' involvement
- EBM: contextualization of guidelines by incorporating qualitative findings into evidence
- Difficulty in identifying consensus quality criteria

# Introduction

## Project « colouring the guidelines » in 4 steps

1. What is the most appropriate critical reading framework for assessing the quality criteria of qualitative studies in general practice?
2. What are the methodological characteristics of qualitative studies in general practice?
3. Should a new evaluation tool for studies in general practice, based on qualitative approaches, be proposed and validated?
4. Do qualitative studies of good quality in general practice allow us to better understand the recommendations of guidelines in particular clinical context?

# Objective

To identify the most appropriate critical reading framework for assessing the quality criteria of qualitative studies in general practice

# Methods

1. Literature review in 3 databases by 2 researchers
  - PubMed, Embase and Psycinfo
2. Critical comparative analysis by 2 researchers
  - Comparison of 3 validated publication standards (RATS, COREQ and SRQR) versus quality standards identified from the literature review

# Method (1): Literature review

## INCLUSION CRITERIA

Articles discussing quality in qualitative research based on:

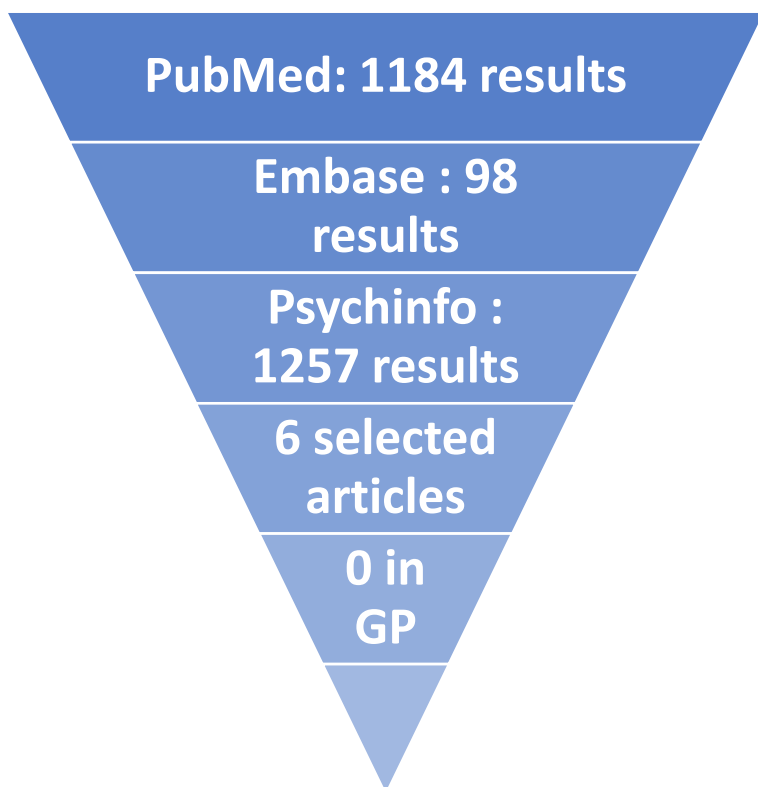
- ✓ qualitative research design
- ✓ quality standards
- ✓ social and medical sciences
- ✓ Date of publication (after 2014)

## EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- ✓ Articles discussing qualitative evidence synthesis, MS and SR
- ✓ Articles providing no relevant information to clarify quality standards

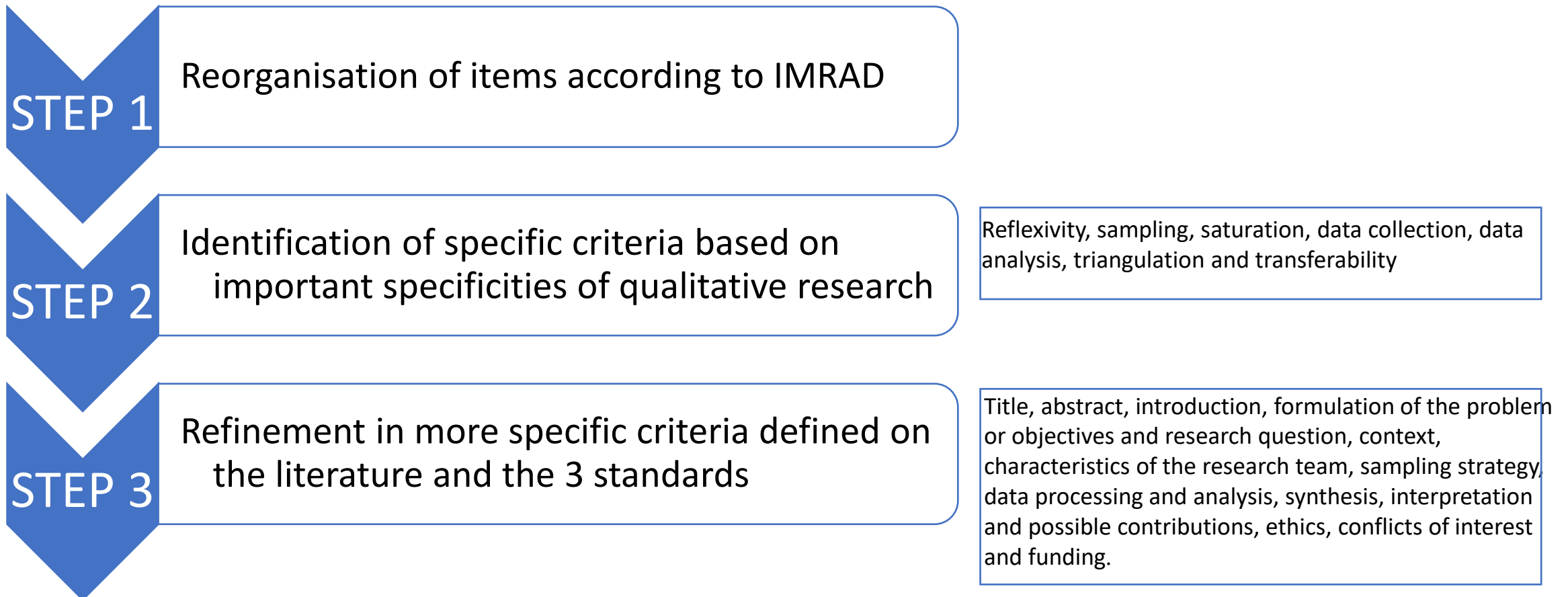


# Results method (1): Literature review



First author	Title	Journal
John Wiley (2014)	Qualitative research: quality results?	Journal of Advanced Nursing: Editorial
Olivia King (2021)	Two sets of qualitative research reporting guidelines: An analysis of the shortfalls	Wiley Research in nursing and health
Jessica L. Johnson (2020)	Qualitative research in pharmacy education. A Review of the Quality Indicators of Rigor in Qualitative Research	American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education
M. Santiago-Delefosse (2016)	Quality of qualitative research in the health sciences: Analysis of the common criteria present in 58 assessment guidelines by expert users	Social Science and Medicine
Shiyou Wu (2016)	Author Guidelines for Manuscripts Reporting on Qualitative Research	Journal of the Society for Social Work & Research
Terese Stenfors (2020)	How to ... assess the quality of qualitative research	The Clinical Teacher

# Method (2): Critical comparative analysis in 3 sequential steps



# Results method (2): Reorganisation of items

Classification used for reorganizing the items from the 3 standards and selected articles

1. Title, summary, and introduction
2. Problem formulation and research objective(s) or question
3. Context
4. Characteristics of the research team and reflexivity
5. Sampling strategy and sample characteristics
6. Method(s) of data collection
7. Data processing and data analysis
8. Techniques to enhance reliability (= triangulation)
9. Discussion, synthesis, interpretation, transferability, and contributions
10. Ethical issues
11. Conflicts of interest, possible fundings

# Analysis : Critical comparative analysis

Criteria	Literature	COREQ	SRQR	RATS
Title, summary, introduction	XX	0	XX	0
Problem and research question	XX	0	XX	XX
Contexte	X	0	X	0
Reflexivity	XX	XXX	XX	X
Sampling strategy				
Recruitment	XXX	XXX	XX	XXX
Sampling characteristics	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Saturation	XXX	X	XX	XX
Data collection	XXX	XX	XXX	X
Data processing and data analysis	XXX	XXX	XX	XXX
Triangulation	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Discussion				
Synthesis, interprétation and contributions	XXX	X	XXX	XXX
Transferability	XXX	XX	XX	XX
Ethical issues	X	0	XXX	XX
Conflicts of interest, possible funding	X	0	XX	X

Literature ranking is based on number of articles reporting the criteria and on richness of justification  
 Ranking for standards: 0 = unreported; X = reported ; XX = well-described ; XXX = very well detailed

# Key messages (1)

NONE OF THE THREE PUBLICATION STANDARDS WERE 100% IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE QUALITY STANDARDS REPORTED IN THE REFERENCED LITERATURE

## Key messages (2)

- ✓ There is no appropriate critical reading framework for assessing the quality criteria of qualitative studies in general practice
- ✓ The quality of qualitative research in general practice can be difficult to evaluate because of incomplete and non-specific reporting of key elements in the validated publication standards
- ✓ A new evaluation framework for qualitative scientific production could be proposed based on these results

# Points for Discussion

- The new evaluation tool will have to :
  - Respect complex philosophical underpinnings of particular qualitative methodologies
  - Be pragmatic
  
- The new evaluation framework could be extended to:
  - Support the research design of master's theses in general practice
  - To other academic works in health sciences

Thanks for your attention  
Questions?





# The 3 validated publication standards :RATS (2003), COREQ (2007) and SRQR (2014)

- RATS: Relevance, Appropriateness, and Transparency Soundness
- COREQ: Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research
- SRQR: Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research

# The 3 validated publication standards :RATS (2003), COREQ (2007) and SRQR (2014)

Table S1. Qualitative Research Review Guidelines (RATS) checklist.

Qualitative Research Review Guidelines – RATS <sup>1</sup>		
Ask this of the manuscript	This should be included in the manuscript	Where item has been addressed
<b>R – Relevance of study design</b>		
Is research question interesting?	Research question explicitly stated	Question provided on page 1 and objectives provided on pages 2 and 6
Is research question relevant to clinical practice, public health, or policy?	Research question justified and linked to the existing knowledge base (empirical research, theory, policy)	Pages 2 through to 6
<b>A – Appropriateness of qualitative method</b>		
Is qualitative methodology the best approach for the study aims?	Study design described and justified e.g., why was a particular method (i.e., interview) chosen?	Pages 6 through to 8
Interviews: experience, perceptions, behavior, practice, process		
Focus groups: group dynamics, convenience, non-sensitive topics		
Ethnography: culture, organizational behavior, interaction		
Textual analysis: documents, art, representations, conversations		
<b>T – transparency of procedures</b>		
Sampling Are the participants selected the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study?	Criteria for selecting the study sample justified and explained theoretical/ based on pre conceived or emergent theory purpose: diversity of opinion volunteer: feasibility, hard-to-reach groups	Page 8
Is the sampling strategy appropriate?		
Recruitment Was recruitment conducted using appropriate methods?	Details of how recruitment was conducted and by whom	Pages 6 through to 8
Is the sampling strategy appropriate?	Details of who chose not to participate and why	Pages 6 through to 8
Could there be selection bias?		

COREQ (Consolidated criteria for Reporting Qualitative research) Checklist

A checklist of items that should be included in reports of qualitative research. You must report the page number in your manuscript where you consider each of the items listed in this checklist. If you have not included this information, either revise your manuscript accordingly before submitting or note N/A.

Topic	Item No.	Guide Questions/Description	Reported on Page No.
<b>Domain 1: Research team and reflexivity</b>			
Personal characteristics			
Interviewer/facilitator	1	Which author/s conducted the interview or focus group?	
Credentials	2	What were the researcher's credentials? (e.g. PhD, MD)	
Occupation	3	What was their occupation at the time of the study?	
Gender	4	Was the researcher male or female?	
Experience and training	5	What experience or training did the researcher have?	
Relationship with participants			
Relationship established	6	Was a relationship established prior to study commencement?	
Participant knowledge of the interviewer	7	What did the participants know about the researcher? e.g. personal goals, reasons for doing the research	
Interviewer characteristics	8	What characteristics were reported about the interviewer/facilitator? e.g. Bias, assumptions, reasons and interests in the research topic	
<b>Domain 2: Study design</b>			
Theoretical/framework			
Methodological orientation and theory	9	What methodological orientation was stated to underpin the study? e.g. grounded theory, discourse analysis, ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis	
Participant selection			
Sampling	10	How were participants selected? e.g. purposive, convenience, consecutive, snowball	
Method of approach	11	How were participants approached? e.g. face-to-face, telephone, mail, email	
Sample size	12	How many participants were in the study?	
Non-participation	13	How many people refused to participate or dropped out? Reasons?	
Setting			
Setting of data collection	14	Where was the data collected? e.g. home, clinic, workplace	
Presence of non-participants	15	Was anyone else present besides the participants and researchers?	
Description of sample	16	What are the important characteristics of the sample? e.g. demographic data, date	
Data collection			
Interview guide	17	Were questions, prompts, guides provided by the authors? Was it pilot tested?	
Repeat interviews	18	Were repeat inter views carried out? If yes, how many?	
Audio/visual recording	19	Did the research use audio or visual recording to collect the data?	
Field notes	20	Were field notes made during and/or after the inter view or focus group?	
Duration	21	What was the duration of the inter views or focus group?	
Data saturation	22	Was data saturation discussed?	
Transcripts returned	23	Were transcripts returned to participants for comment and/or	

Table 1  
Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR)<sup>a</sup>

No.	Topic	Item
<b>Title and abstract</b>		
51	Title	Concise description of the nature and topic of the study identifying the study as qualitative or indicating the approach (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory) or data collection methods (e.g., interview, focus group) is recommended
52	Abstract	Summary of key elements of the study using the abstract format of the intended publication; typically includes background, purpose, methods, results, and conclusions
<b>Introduction</b>		
53	Problem formulation	Description and significance of the problem/phenomenon studied; review of relevant theory and empirical work; problem statement
54	Purpose or research question	Purpose of the study and specific objectives or questions
<b>Methods</b>		
55	Qualitative approach and research paradigm	Qualitative approach (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenology, narrative research) and guiding theory if appropriate; identifying the research paradigm (e.g., postpositivist, constructivist/interpretivist) is also recommended; rationale <sup>b</sup>
56	Researcher characteristics and reflexivity	Researchers' characteristics that may influence the research, including personal attributes, qualifications/experience, relationship with participants, assumptions, and/or presuppositions, potential or actual interaction between researchers' characteristics and the research questions, approach, methods, results, and/or transferability
57	Context	Setting/site and salient contextual factors; rationale <sup>b</sup>
58	Sampling strategy	How and why research participants, documents, or events were selected; criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary (e.g., sampling saturation); rationale <sup>b</sup>
59	Ethical issues pertaining to human subjects	Documentation of approval by an appropriate ethics review board and participant consent, or explanation for lack thereof, other confidentiality and data security issues
60	Data collection methods	Types of data collected; details of data collection procedures including (as appropriate) start and stop dates of data collection and analysis, iterative process, triangulation of sources/methods, and modification of procedures in response to evolving study findings; rationale <sup>b</sup>
61	Data collection instruments and technologies	Description of instruments (e.g., interview guides, questionnaires) and devices (e.g., audio recorders) used for data collection; how the instrument(s) changed over the course of the study
62	Units of study	Number and relevant characteristics of participants, documents, or events included in the study; level of participation (could be reported in results)
63	Data processing	Methods for processing data prior to and during analysis, including transcription, data entry, data management and security, verification of data integrity, data coding, and anonymization/identification of excerpts
64	Data analysis	Process by which inferences, themes, etc., were identified and developed, including the researchers involved in data analysis; usually references a specific paradigm or approach; rationale <sup>b</sup>
65	Techniques to enhance trustworthiness	Techniques to enhance trustworthiness and credibility of data analysis (e.g., member checking, audit trail, triangulation); rationale <sup>b</sup>
<b>Results/findings</b>		
66	Synthesis and interpretation	Main findings (e.g., interpretations, inferences, and themes); might include development of a theory or model, or integration with prior research or theory
67	Links to empirical data	Evidence (e.g., quotes, field notes, text excerpts, photographs) to substantiate analytic findings
<b>Discussion</b>		
68	Integration with prior work, implications, transferability, and contributions to the field	Short summary of main findings; explanation of how findings and conclusions connect to, support, elaborate on, or challenge conclusions of earlier scholarship; discussion of scope of application/generalizability; identification of unique contributions to scholarship in a discipline or field
69	Limitations	Trustworthiness and limitations of findings

(Table modified)

# Literature review bias : cut off publication date at 2014

3 articles published before 2014 (publication date of SRQR) are relevant according to inclusion and exclusion criterias:

1. Côte L, Turgeon J. Comment lire de façon critique les articles de recherche qualitative en médecine. *Pédagogie Médicale*. mai 2002;3(2):81-90.
2. Barusch A, Gringeri C, George M. Rigor in Qualitative Social Work Research: A Review of Strategies Used in Published Articles. *Soc Work Res*. 1 mars 2011;35(1):11-9.
3. Hennink M, Weber MB. Quality Issues of Court Reporters and Transcriptionists for Qualitative Research. *Qual Health Res*. mai 2013;23(5):700-10.

# Next steps: Colouring guidelines

- ✓ Facts to objectives
- ✓ Methodologies and results
- ✓ Tool implementation:

Validation:

- Intern: phase test  studies and master thesis works
- Extern: experts

Criteria	COREQ	SRQR	RATS
<b>Characteristics of the research team and reflexivity</b>	<b>Interviewer/facilitator</b> - Which author/s conducted the interview or focus group?	/	/
	<b>Credentials</b> - What were the researcher's credentials? E.g., PhD, MD.	<b>Characteristics that may influence the research</b> - Including personal attributes: qualifications/experience	<b>Role of researchers</b> - Is the researcher(s) appropriate? - Do the researchers occupy dual roles (clinician and researcher)?
	<b>Occupation</b> - What was their occupation at the time of the study?		
	<b>Gender</b> - Was the researcher male or female?		
	<b>Experience and training</b> - What experience or training did the researcher have?		
	<b>Relationship established</b> - Was a relationship established prior to study commencement?	<b>Researcher characteristics and reflexivity</b> - Researchers' characteristics that may influence the research, including personal attributes, qualifications/experience, relationship with participants, assumptions, and/or presuppositions; potential or actual interaction between researchers' characteristics and the research questions, approach, methods, results, and/or transferability	<b>Role of researchers</b> - Do the researcher(s) critically examine their own influence on the formulation of the research question, data collection, and interpretation?
	<b>Participant knowledge of the interviewer</b> - What did the participants know about the researcher? e.g. personal goals, reasons for doing the research		
<b>Interviewer characteristics</b> - What characteristics were reported about the interviewer/facilitator? e.g. Bias, assumptions, reasons and interests in the research topic			
		/	/

Criteria	Specific criteria	Criteria extracted from selected articles
<p><b>Characteristics of the research team and reflexivity</b></p>	<p><b>Reflexivity</b></p>	<p><b>Author Guidelines for Manuscripts Reporting on Qualitative Research</b>  <b>Introduction/Background: Methods</b>            -Author reflexivity or standpoint description, including the characteristics and background as the author(s).            - Author reflexivity description is important to not only making clear to the reader how the authors are connected to the participants and the study but also making the research process transparent.</p>
		<p><b>How to ... assess the quality of qualitative research</b>            - An important marker of quality is that the researcher reflects his or her role in the study (e.g., their relationship to the respondents). This process, reflexivity, is a key marker of quality. Explanations of how reflexivity was embedded and supported in the research process.</p>
		<p><b>Two sets of qualitative research reporting guidelines: An analysis of the shortfalls. Research in Nursing &amp; Health.</b>            As both a universal and critical feature of rigor in qualitative research, reporting guidelines should emphasize the centrality of reflexivity to the entire qualitative research process.            + Reflexivity refers to a researcher's awareness including insight about the influence their political orientations, cultural characteristics, and personal beliefs have on all aspects of the research process. Reflexivity as a process helps to sustain the researchers' awareness of their personal beliefs as a means of ensuring that these beliefs do not overshadow or distort data from the participants. Achieving reflexivity is more than presenting the reader with a list of characteristics that they can use to judge the researcher's credibility as Tong et al. (2007) suggest. Critical reflection throughout the research process facilitates researchers' recognition of what they know and how they have come to know it and how it influences their view of the data.</p>