

doing a literature review in health and social care

Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care: A Comprehensive Guide

Doing a literature review in health and social care is a fundamental step for researchers, practitioners, and students aiming to understand existing knowledge, identify gaps, and inform practice or further research. The complexity of health and social care environments, combined with the diversity of sources and disciplines involved, makes conducting an effective literature review both a challenging and rewarding process. This article offers a comprehensive overview of how to approach, plan, and execute a literature review in this vital field.

Understanding the Purpose of a Literature Review in Health and Social Care

Why Conduct a Literature Review?

- To gain an in-depth understanding of current research and practice trends
- To identify gaps or limitations in existing knowledge
- To establish a theoretical framework for your research or practice project
- To inform evidence-based decision-making
- To avoid duplication of efforts by understanding what has already been studied

Types of Literature Reviews in Health and Social Care

- Narrative Literature Review: Provides a broad overview of a topic, synthesizing findings qualitatively.
- Systematic Review: Employs a rigorous, methodical approach to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant studies.
- Meta-Analysis: Combines quantitative data from multiple studies to arrive at pooled estimates.
- Scoping Review: Maps the existing literature on a topic to identify key concepts, gaps, and types of evidence.

Understanding the type of review suitable for your purpose is essential at the outset.

Planning Your Literature Review

Defining Your Research Question or Objectives

Start with clear, focused questions or objectives. Use frameworks like PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) to structure your questions effectively in health and social care contexts.

Developing a Search Strategy

- Identify relevant keywords and synonyms related to your topic
- Use Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) to refine searches
- Decide on inclusion and exclusion criteria (e.g., publication date, study type, population)
- Select databases and sources (e.g., PubMed, CINAHL, PsycINFO, Cochrane Library, social care journals)

Creating a Protocol

Draft a review protocol outlining:

- Research questions
- Search strategies
- Inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Data extraction methods
- Quality assessment criteria

This enhances transparency and reproducibility.

Conducting the Literature Search

Database Selection and Search Execution

Choose multiple databases to cover interdisciplinary sources in health and social care:

- PubMed/MEDLINE: Biomedical research
- CINAHL: Nursing and allied health
- PsycINFO: Psychology and mental health
- Scopus and Web of Science: Multidisciplinary sources
- Sociological and social work databases: Sociological and social care research

Use advanced search features to narrow down results effectively.

Managing Search Results

- Use reference management software (e.g., EndNote, Zotero, Mendeley)

- Organize articles by relevance and quality
- Record search strategies and results for transparency

Screening and Selecting Studies

Initial Screening

- Review titles and abstracts against inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Discard irrelevant or low-quality studies

Full-Text Review

- Read selected articles thoroughly
- Assess relevance and methodological quality
- Document reasons for exclusion at this stage

Ensuring Rigor and Reducing Bias

- Use standardized appraisal tools (e.g., CASP, PRISMA checklists)
- Involve multiple reviewers to enhance objectivity

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Extracting Key Information

Create a data extraction form capturing:

- Study details (authors, year, location)
- Research design and methods
- Sample size and characteristics
- Interventions or variables studied
- Main findings and conclusions
- Limitations and biases

Organizing and Analyzing Data

- Use thematic analysis for qualitative data
- Develop categories or themes emerging from the literature
- For quantitative data, consider meta-analysis if appropriate
- Identify patterns, contradictions, and gaps

Writing the Literature Review

Structuring Your Review

- Introduction: Contextualize the topic and state objectives
- Methodology: Describe search strategies, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and appraisal methods
- Main Body: Organize by themes, chronological order, or methodological approaches
- Discussion: Summarize key findings, implications for practice, and gaps
- Conclusion: Highlight the overall contribution and suggest future research directions

Ensuring Quality and Coherence

- Use clear, concise language
- Synthesize findings rather than merely listing studies
- Critically appraise and compare studies
- Cite sources appropriately

Ethical Considerations in Literature Reviews

- Properly attribute all sources
- Avoid plagiarism
- Be transparent about limitations and potential biases
- Respect copyright and licensing agreements

Common Challenges and Tips for Success

Challenges

- Managing large volumes of literature
- Ensuring comprehensive coverage
- Dealing with conflicting evidence
- Maintaining objectivity and avoiding bias

Tips for Effective Literature Reviews

- Start early and plan thoroughly
- Use multiple databases and sources
- Keep meticulous records of searches and decisions
- Engage with subject experts for insights
- Regularly update your review to include recent studies

Utilizing Your Literature Review in Practice and Research

Informing Practice

A well-conducted literature review can:

- Support evidence-based interventions
- Guide policy development
- Enhance professional practice by staying current

Advancing Research

Identify gaps that need further investigation and develop new research questions or hypotheses based on the synthesized evidence.

Conclusion

Conducting a literature review in health and social care is a vital process that demands careful planning, systematic searching, critical appraisal, and thoughtful synthesis. By following structured steps and employing rigorous methods, practitioners and researchers can produce comprehensive reviews that contribute meaningfully to knowledge and practice. Whether informing policy, enhancing clinical interventions, or guiding future research, a well-executed literature review is foundational to advancing health and social care outcomes.

Remember: Effective literature reviews are iterative and reflective. Stay organized, be critical, and maintain transparency throughout the process to ensure your review is robust, credible, and impactful.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key steps involved in conducting a literature review in health and social care?

The key steps include defining the research question, searching for relevant literature, evaluating and selecting credible sources, synthesizing the findings, and writing a comprehensive report that highlights gaps and implications for practice.

How do I ensure the quality and reliability of sources when doing a literature review in health and social care?

To ensure quality, prioritize peer-reviewed journals, authoritative books, and reputable organizations. Critically appraise each source for validity, bias, and relevance, and consider the methodology and sample size used in studies.

What are common challenges faced during a literature review in health and social care, and how can they be addressed?

Common challenges include information overload, limited access to certain studies, and keeping up with rapidly evolving evidence. These can be addressed by defining clear inclusion criteria, using advanced search strategies, and utilizing institutional access or interlibrary loans.

How can I effectively organize and manage references during a literature review in health and social care?

Using reference management software like EndNote, Zotero, or Mendeley helps organize sources, generate citations, and keep track of key themes and notes, making the review process more efficient.

What is the importance of a literature review in health and social care research?

A literature review provides a foundation for understanding existing knowledge, identifies gaps in the literature, informs research questions, and guides evidence-based practice to improve health and social care outcomes.

Additional Resources

Literature Review in Health and Social Care: An Expert Guide to Navigating the Foundations of Evidence-Based Practice

Embarking on a literature review in health and social care is akin to assembling a complex puzzle—each piece of research, policy, or theory contributes to a comprehensive understanding that informs practice, policy, and future research. In a sector where patient outcomes, social well-being, and ethical considerations intersect, conducting a meticulous literature review is not just academic rigor; it's a vital step toward evidence-based, effective, and compassionate care.

This expert feature unpacks the nuances of performing a robust literature review within health and social care, offering insights, strategies, and practical tips for students, practitioners, and researchers alike. Think of it as your comprehensive toolkit to master

this foundational research process, ensuring your work stands on a solid scholarly footing.

Understanding the Purpose and Significance of a Literature Review

Before delving into the nuts and bolts, it's essential to grasp why a literature review is indispensable in health and social care. Unlike a simple summary, a well-conducted review synthesizes existing knowledge, identifies gaps, and frames your research within the broader scholarly context.

Why Conduct a Literature Review?

- Establishing a Theoretical Framework: It helps situate your research questions within existing theories or models relevant to health and social care.
- Identifying Gaps and Opportunities: Recognizing areas where evidence is lacking or inconclusive guides your research focus.
- Avoiding Duplication: Ensures your work adds new insights rather than repeating what's already known.
- Informing Methodology: Understanding what methods have been effective in prior studies can shape your approach.
- Supporting Evidence-Based Practice: Synthesizing current evidence informs practical interventions and policy decisions.

The Impact on Practice and Policy

In health and social care, research isn't conducted in isolation; its ultimate goal is to improve lives. A literature review ensures that innovations are grounded in proven strategies, policies are informed by the latest evidence, and practitioners remain at the forefront of best practices.

Planning Your Literature Review: Setting the Foundation

Effective literature reviews are underpinned by strategic planning. This stage involves clarifying scope, defining objectives, and organizing your approach.

Defining the Scope and Research Questions

Start with clear, focused questions that guide your review. For example:

- What are the latest interventions for managing dementia in community settings?
- How does social support influence mental health among adolescents?

Ensure your questions are specific enough to narrow your search but broad enough to encompass relevant literature.

Tips for defining scope:

- Consider population, intervention, comparison, outcome (PICO) framework where appropriate.
- Limit by geography, time frame, or study type if necessary.

Establishing Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Determine what types of studies, publications, or evidence you will include. Criteria might include:

- Publication date range (e.g., last 10 years)
- Study design (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods)
- Language (e.g., English only)
- Relevance to your research questions

This process ensures consistency and transparency.

Developing a Search Strategy

Design comprehensive search terms and identify relevant databases (see below). Use Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), truncation, and wildcards to refine searches. Pilot your strategy and adjust as needed to maximize relevant results.

Sources and Databases: Navigating the Evidence

Landscape

In health and social care, the quality and breadth of sources directly influence the robustness of your review.

Key Databases and Repositories

- PubMed/MEDLINE: Biomedical literature, clinical studies, systematic reviews.
- CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature): Nursing, allied health, social care topics.
- PsycINFO: Psychology and mental health research.
- Social Care Online: UK-based social work and social care policy.
- Scopus & Web of Science: Multidisciplinary coverage with citation tracking.
- Google Scholar: Broad, inclusive search, including grey literature.

Grey Literature and Policy Documents

In health and social care, grey literature (government reports, policy documents, theses, conference proceedings) can provide valuable, up-to-date insights often absent from peer-reviewed journals.

Sources include:

- Government health departments
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Research councils and think tanks
- Institutional repositories

Conducting the Search: Strategies for Effective Literature Harvesting

The search process is iterative and requires patience, precision, and critical judgment.

Best practices include:

- Use a combination of keywords and controlled vocabulary: MeSH terms in PubMed or Thesaurus terms in other databases.
- Apply filters judiciously: To narrow down to relevant studies without missing key literature.
- Document your search process: Including search strings, databases used, date of searches, and number of results.
- Screen systematically: First by titles and abstracts, then by full-text review.

Critical Appraisal: Assessing the Quality and Relevance of Evidence

Not all studies are created equal. Critical appraisal involves evaluating the methodological quality, validity, and applicability of each source.

Tools and Checklists

- CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme): For qualitative studies, systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials.
- Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Checklists: For diverse study types.
- PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses): For systematic review reporting standards.

Evaluation criteria include:

- Clarity of research question
- Appropriateness of methodology
- Sample size and selection
- Data collection and analysis rigor
- Bias and confounding factors
- Relevance to your research questions

Synthesizing the Literature: From Summaries to Critical Analysis

Once sources are appraised, the next step is synthesis—bringing together findings into a coherent narrative.

Types of Synthesis

- Thematic: Identifying recurring themes or patterns across studies.
- Methodological: Comparing findings based on study design or approach.
- Chronological: Tracing how evidence or understanding has evolved over time.
- Theoretical: Linking findings to underlying theories or models.

Effective synthesis involves:

- Highlighting agreements and disagreements among studies.
- Identifying gaps where evidence is lacking or inconsistent.
- Recognizing trends, innovations, and emerging debates.
- Presenting a balanced, critical perspective rather than mere summaries.

Writing Up Your Literature Review: Clarity, Coherence, and Criticality

A well-structured write-up communicates your findings clearly and convincingly.

Key components include:

- Introduction: Outlining the scope, objectives, and importance.
- Methodology: Detailing your search strategy, inclusion criteria, and appraisal tools.
- Main Body: Organizing themes, debates, or chronologies with critical discussion.
- Discussion: Summarizing key insights, implications for practice, gaps, and future directions.

- References: Accurate and consistent citation of sources.

Writing tips:

- Use clear headings and subheadings for navigation.
- Maintain an analytical voice, not just descriptive.
- Critically evaluate the quality and relevance of evidence.
- Connect findings back to your research questions or practice implications.

Maintaining Rigor and Ethical Standards

Ensuring integrity in your review is paramount.

Best practices include:

- Transparency: Document your process thoroughly for reproducibility.
- Objectivity: Recognize biases, including publication bias or language bias.
- Plagiarism avoidance: Properly cite all sources.
- Respect for copyright: Use open-access or properly licensed materials.

Conclusion: Mastering the Art of Literature Review in Health and Social Care

Performing a thorough literature review is both an art and a science—demanding meticulousness, critical thinking, and strategic planning. In health and social care, where evidence directly influences people's lives, the stakes are high. A comprehensive review not only grounds your work in existing knowledge but also illuminates pathways for innovation, policy change, and improved care delivery.

By understanding the purpose, employing systematic search and appraisal strategies, synthesizing evidence critically, and communicating findings effectively, you position yourself as a competent contributor to the field—whether you're laying the foundation for a research project, informing policy, or advancing best practices.

Remember, a literature review isn't merely a task; it's a cornerstone of scholarly integrity and a catalyst for meaningful impact in health and social care. Embrace the process with

curiosity, rigor, and ethical mindfulness, and you'll ensure your work stands out as a credible and valuable addition to this vital sector.

Doing A Literature Review In Health And Social Care

doing a literature review in health and social care: Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care: A Practical Guide Helen Aveyard, 2018-11-15 This best-selling book is a step-by-step guide to doing a literature review for students in all areas of health and social care. It is vital reading for all those doing their undergraduate dissertation or any study that involves doing a literature review. This book provides a practical guide to doing a literature review from start to finish. This fourth edition includes: • A broad range of real life examples of how to overcome challenges in the process • How to get your question right • Updated guidance on following a clear search strategy for relevant literature using the appropriate technology • Expanded guide to using a range of critical appraisal tools • Increased emphasis on presenting your findings or using them in practice • Tips and coverage on how to write up your review **Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care** is essential reading for anyone new to reviewing and presenting evidence in a review. "This essential guide demystifies the literature review process... The fourth edition has retained its accessible and user friendly style for which the text has become known. A useful glossary and the questioning style are just some of the pedagogical features of this text. I will continue to recommend this book to my students." Debra Jackson, RN PhD FACN, Professor of Nursing, University of Technology, Sydney

doing a literature review in health and social care: **Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care: A Practical Guide 5e** Helen Aveyard, 2023-03-27 "If you want to understand, design, or carry out a literature review to improve the quality of care that you or others deliver, then look no further." Dr Ray Samuriwo, Associate Professor in Adult Nursing, University of Bradford, UK "If I was to endorse only one research book in the future - this one would be it." Ruth Trout, Senior Lecturer in Acute Care, Programme and BSc Dissertation Lead, MSc Dissertation Supervisor, Buckinghamshire New University, UK "This new edition provides the straightforward and accessible manual for successfully understanding and conducting literature reviews that we have come to expect from Aveyard." Victoria Sweetmore, University of Derby, UK This best-selling book, now in its fifth edition, is a step-by-step guide to doing a literature review for students in all areas of health and social care. It is essential reading for all those doing their undergraduate dissertation or any study that involves doing a literature review. The new edition maintains its signature 'can do' approach and provides a practical guide to doing a literature review from start to finish. This book includes: • A broad and updated range of real life examples of how to overcome challenges in the process • Tips on how to get your question right • Updated guidance on following a clear search strategy for relevant literature using the appropriate technology • Brand new and accessible chapter summaries • An expanded guide for the application of critical appraisal tools • An increased emphasis on presenting your findings or using them in practice • Tips and coverage on how to write up your review **Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care** is vital reading for anyone new to reviewing and presenting evidence in a review. Helen Aveyard is a Principal Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University, UK with a background in nursing. Helen is co-author of *A Postgraduates Guide to Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care*, *A Beginner's Guide to Evidence Based Practice* and *A Beginner's Guide to Critical Thinking and Writing in Health and Social Care*.

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write up a research project successfully.

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doing a literature review in health and social care: A Postgraduate's Guide to Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care, 2e Helen Aveyard, Sheila Payne, Nancy Preston, 2021-06-10 This text is a comprehensive, highly readable guide to how to undertake a literature review in health and social care, tailored specifically for postgraduate study. Essential reading for all those undertaking any study at post-graduate level, the book provides clarity and a step by step approach to doing a literature review from start to finish which will enable you to: • Identify which type of review is appropriate for your study • Select the literature that you need to include in your review • Search for, appraise and analyse relevant literature • Write up your review Crucially the book explores the common features of a broad range of types of literature review, which serve different functions - including the literature review that is a pre-requisite prior to a larger empirical study, and the literature review that is a study in its own right. With real-life examples of written research and succinct summaries at the end of each chapter, A Post-Graduate's Guide to Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care is the ideal text for students wanting to get the very most from their study.

doing a literature review in health and social care: Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care Helen Aveyard, 2010-05-01 This book is superb. Most undergraduates have to undertake some form of literature review which may be daunting, this book explains it in a clear, easy to understand format. Explanations are given as to why undertaking a literature review is undertaken. Summery sections at the end of each chapter allow the reader to reflect on what they have just read, allowing the information to sink in. This book should be on every university's recommended reading list. Kerry Davis, Student Nurse, University Campus Suffolk, UK This book is fantastic! It gives a clear, concise guide to carrying out a literature review, which is of course a widely used formative assessment technique in a nursing program ... (it includes) in depth

explanations and reasons as to how and why it is important to do a literature review ... the summary section at the end of each chapter is excellent, and allows the reader to review their understanding of what they're just read. Overall an excellent book which is a must for any student nurse! Gem Smith, Student Nurse, Northumbria University, UK This book is superb. It explains the entire process of writing a literature review very clearly ... extremely helpful as the prospect of reviewing literature can be quite daunting. Vicky Bain, Student Nurse, University of Nottingham, UK A comprehensive, easy to read guide which will help students to understand how to undertake a literature review, and how to use the resultant information effectively. Anne-Marie Warnes, University of Central Lancashire, UK As a student, currently writing a literature review, I found this an extremely helpful book, which is invaluable in demystifying some of the more challenging elements, while at the same time providing clear, simple, appealing and appropriate guidance. This is a must have for undergraduate nursing students, and indeed all healthcare students embarking on such projects. Audrey Grace, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland This bestselling book is a step-by-step guide to doing a literature review in health and social care. It is vital reading for all those undertaking their undergraduate or postgraduate dissertation or any research module which involves a literature review. The new edition has been fully updated and provides a practical guide to the different types of literature that you may come across when undertaking a literature review. It includes: Examples of commonly occurring real life scenarios encountered by students Emphasis on the importance of setting a question at the very start of the project Advice on how to follow a clearly defined search strategy Details of a wide range of critical appraisal tools Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care 2/e is essential reading for students at all levels within the health and social care field - and a useful text for anyone new to reviewing and appraising evidence.

doing a literature review in health and social care: Literature Reviews in Social Work Robin Kiteley, Christine Stogdon, 2013-11-14 This book will provide you with a clear and accessible guide to the process of conducting a literature review, giving you the skills, confidence and knowledge required to produce your own successful review. Drawing on their wealth of teaching experience, the authors outline best practice in: -Choosing your topic -Effective search strategies -Taking notes -Organising your material -Accurate referencing -Managing the process of writing your literature review -Enhancing evidence-based practice. Trying to complete a literature review, research project or dissertation as part of your social work degree? This book will prove the perfect companion. Robin Kiteley is Lecturer at the University of Huddersfield. Chris Stogdon is a social work educator and practitioner.

doing a literature review in health and social care: The Research Process in Nursing Kate Gerrish, Anne Lacey, 2010-05-24 'The perfect text for any health care professional who wishes to gain a sound understanding of research...This text succeeds where others fail in terms of the thoroughness of the research process and the accessible style in which the material is presented. In an age when nursing and health care research is going from strength to strength this book offers those in the world of academia and practice an excellent and essential 'bible' that is a must on any bookshelf' Dr Aisha Holloway, Lecturer Adult Health, Division of Nursing, The University of Nottingham 'a book that helps you each step of the way. A very understandable and enjoyable publication' Accident and Emergency Nursing Journal 'key reference resource that students of research can use at various levels of study. It is comprehensive, user friendly and very easy to read and make sense of' Gillian E Lang, Amazon reviewer The sixth edition of this book reflects significant developments in nursing research in recent years, ensuring the reader is provided with the very latest information on research processes and methods. It continues to explore how to undertake research as well as evaluating and using research findings in clinical practice, in a way that is suitable for both novice researchers and those with more experience. Divided into six sections, the chapters are ordered in a logical fashion that also allows the reader to dip in and out. The first two sections of the book provide a comprehensive background to research in nursing. The third section presents a variety of qualitative and quantitative approaches, both new and well-established. The final three sections then look at collecting and making sense of the resulting

data and putting the research findings into clinical practice. Summarises key points at the start of each chapter to guide you through Includes contributions from a wide range of experts in the field Accessible but doesn't shrink away from complex debates and technical issues New to this edition: Accompanying website (www.wiley.com/go/gerrish) Ten completely new chapters including Narrative Research, Mixed Methods and Using Research in Clinical Practice 'Research Example' boxes from a wide variety of research types

doing a literature review in health and social care: The Essential Guide to Doing a Health and Social Care Literature Review Jaqui Hewitt-Taylor, 2017-04-26 This step-by-step guide takes the reader logically through the process of undertaking a literature review, from determining when this methodology might be useful, through to publishing the findings. It is designed particularly for students undertaking a dissertation using literature review methodology. However, it also caters to practitioners who wish to review the existing evidence in order to develop practice. Key features of the text include: a chapter on what makes a good literature review, so that readers are clear and confident about what they're aiming for; discussion of the value of literature reviews, whether for fulfilling the requirements of a course or for developing practice; a chapter structure that reflects the structure of a typical dissertation by literature review, making the material intuitive and easy to navigate; case examples throughout to illustrate how methodological principles work in practice; a troubleshooting guide to provide support and advice on common problems when carrying out a literature review; advice on the dissemination of findings. Written by an established author with significant experience teaching and supervising students doing literature reviews, this invaluable text offers systematic and insightful advice on all aspects of literature review methodology, from problem identification to synthesizing information to forming conclusions. It is ideal for any student or practitioner in health and social care looking to undertake a literature review for study or practice purposes.

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- Case studies and real-life examples from a range of disciplines so you can learn from other researchers who have been in your shoes
- DIY activities so you can practise your skills and get to grips with key concepts
- Practical advice on how to organise your writing, develop your flow and build strong arguments
- Further guidance on assessing ethical risk, including examples of high, medium, and low risk projects

Written in Gary's signature straightforward style, this book is an essential companion for anyone undertaking a research project in the applied social sciences.

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Dean in the Faculty of Health and Social Care at the University of Chester. Tom Mason was Professor and Head of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities at the University of Chester. Elizabeth Mason-Whitehead is Professor of Social and Health Care in the Faculty of Health and Social Care at the University of Chester. David Coyle is a Lecturer in the School of Healthcare Sciences at Bangor University.

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doing a literature review in health and social care: Integrating Healthcare with Information and Communications Technology Wendy Currie, David Finnegan, 2009 This book sets out to answer the key question of how healthcare providers can move from a fragmented to an integrated provision, including how ICT be used to develop a market approach - variety and choice of service providers for patients - against a background of institutionalised and ingrained practices. A team of academic and practitioner experts with many years' healthcare and research experience considers the broad issues of transforming healthcare using ICTs, electronic health records (EHRs), and approaches taken internationally to the healthcare integration challenge. The book will be essential reading for those involved in ICTs at a strategic or managerial level, and for contractors and developers implementing solutions on their behalf. The book will also be of interest for all those concerned with integrating healthcare and ICT at every level throughout the world.

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Walliman, 2019-12-06 With a calming, reassuring tone, Nicholas Walliman gives you the ability and confidence to plan, design, and prepare for your research project. The new edition of this bestselling book will help you: - Explain research theory within the context of your own project - Curate, structure, and format your literature review - Anticipate the challenges of social media and web-based research - Apply 'how to' tips quickly to your own research planning and design - Monitor your progress in the field with checklists - Develop writing habits to use as a springboard for dissertations, reports, and articles - Build a foundation of practical, general research skills like time management, organization, and critical thinking to carry you beyond your project. New to the 4th Edition: - New step-by-step chapter on how to write a successful research proposal - New chapter 'Writing Strategies' offers guidelines for different assignments to help carry students beyond their research proposal - More 'How To' examples of literature reviews, proposals and ethics applications - Expanded coverage of literature review strategies - more emphasis on accessing on-line resources and use of the internet - Enhanced checklists of issues for consideration or tasks students should undertake in order to progress their work - More information surrounding online and social media research and implications on information sourcing, ethics, and methods - Increased coverage of the research methods section to include more practical support and additional information on mixed-methods - Further stresses the importance of avoiding plagiarism with an expanded section on this topic.

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