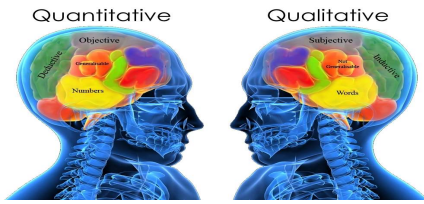


Qualitative Research



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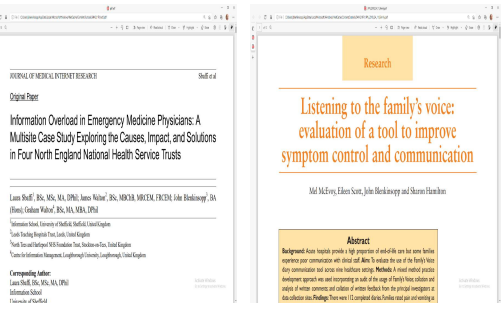
Appraising Qualitative Tests?

- At first sight, appraisal of qualitative studies seems more intuitive and less deductive; less of a science and more of an art
- What are your views of qualitative studies?
 - Have you appraised them before?

The Role of Qualitative Research in Evidence Based Practice

- Give patients a voice and a view ('client focussed care')
- Gives a human dimension to research
 - Doing things **with** patients vs Doing things **to** patients
 - A change from passive receipt of treatment to an involvement in it
 - Appropriateness of treatment
 - Quality of life as opposed to length of life
 - Side effects

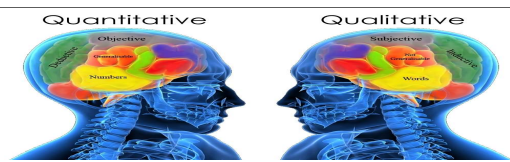
Qualitative Research



Insight in Healthcare

- Phenomenological vs scientific
- Why do people behave in a certain way?
- How are opinions and attitudes formed?
- Why do people feel a certain way as a result of events?
- Subjective statements – ‘in my experience, this happens because...’

Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Studies



- **If you want to know how often GPs prescribe antibiotics for sore throats, you need to do quantitative research.**
- **If you want to know why GPs do or don't prescribe antibiotics for sore throats, you need to do qualitative research.**

Different Approaches



- Phenomenology – describing an event that the patient experiences – e.g. back pain
- Ethnography – ‘portrait of people’ with focus groups and interviews
- Action Research - Researchers and patients collaborate to describe their experiences
- Narrative Research - Researchers examine stories to understand how patients perceive and try to contextualise their experience

Warfarin



- There are thousands of papers that tell me about the effectiveness of Warfarin, but most patients are worried about side effects and the experience of taking the drug

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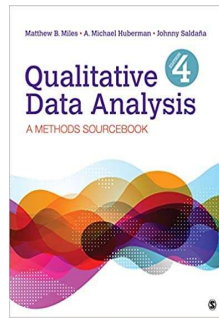
Qualitative research and sociological research

- Data usually gathered in the form of interviews or observation. Feelings and insights are considered important
- The theory is developed from the data (“grounded theory”) - themes and issues emerge during the study, sometimes surprisingly

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Qualitative Research Methods

- **Observations** - recording what you have observed in detailed notes.
- **Interviews** - Asking people questions in one-on-one conversations.
- **Focus groups** - asking questions and generating discussion among a group of people.
- **Survey** - Questionnaires with open ended questionnaires



Checking Validity

- Giving the findings to the subjects to check that they are a reasonable account - “member checking”.
- “Triangulation” - using more than one, independent source.
 - In the antibiotics & sore throats example, a researcher may get data from a focus group, as well as send written questionnaires to other individual GPs. If the results are broadly similar, there is more chance that the results are valid.

Main Issues

- The outcomes may be more subjective and multi-faceted than “absent / present” dichotomies.
- The tools for data collection (interviews, focus groups and surveys) may be more at risk of observer effect and bias than quantitative methods
- There may be a uneasy suspicion that the authors, however subconsciously, have been “selective” in their choice of quotes to support conclusions

Critically Appraising Qualitative Studies

- We need to identify a clear aim for their project, not just an attempt to gather masses of data and then impose some "order" on it
- choice of an *appropriate* methodology
- Justification for who *was* and who *was not* included, and some discussion of the effect of drop outs and non-responders.

Practical Workshop

- We are about to review a qualitative research study
- Appraise the approach
 - Is it open to any bias?
 - Have they asked ‘the right’ questions?
 - Have they ‘saturated’ the data?

