SWAR 23: Exploring the use of consultation exercises within scoping reviews: a qualitative interview study

Objective of this SWAR
This Study Within a Review (SWAR) aims to explore the views and experiences of authors of scoping reviews regarding knowledge user consultations within their reviews. We will conduct qualitative interviews with authors who have conducted a consultation exercise as part of their review. Specifically, our objectives are to (1) explore authors' views regarding the value, utility and impact of knowledge user consultations within scoping reviews; and (2) identify the barriers and enablers to conducting knowledge user consultations within scoping reviews

Study area: Scoping review planning and conduct
Sample type: Researchers
Estimated funding level needed: Low

Background
Scoping reviews combine several study designs to comprehensively map the 'key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available' [1]. Scoping review methodology has advanced over time. In 2005, Arksey and O'Malley developed a highly-cited landmark framework, which identified six distinct stages including identifying the research question, identifying relevant studies, study selection, data charting, collating, summarizing and reporting results, and an optional sixth stage involving stakeholder or 'knowledge user' consultations [1]. We recognize that the term 'stakeholder' may hold negative connotations for some [2] and therefore for this research project we will use the term 'knowledge user'. A knowledge user is 'anyone invested in the production of research, and who may benefit or be impacted by the research, and this can include patients, clinicians, allied health providers, policy makers and decision-makers from government and non-government organizations' [3]. Arksey and O'Malley suggested that consulting with knowledge users could inform, validate and enhance the review findings. This framework was then advanced in 2010 by Levac, Colquhoun and O'Brien who further clarified and expanded on these stages [4]. This included recommending that the knowledge user consultation exercise (CE) become a required component of scoping reviews to offer additional sources of information, add meaning and bring different perspectives to the review, as well as serving as a knowledge translation mechanism to translate findings for knowledge users. In 2022, Pollock et al, on behalf of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), subsequently published guidance on knowledge user consultations and involvement within scoping reviews [3]. The authors acknowledged that the use of CEs in scoping reviews has been poorly explored to date and recommended that knowledge users should be involved across all stages of scoping reviews, not just as a final consultation step but moving towards a co-creation model (e.g. with knowledge users as part of the research team working collaboratively with researchers). A recent scoping review by Zarshenas et al [5] has provided an example of how both co-creation and a CE can be used within the same scoping review, positing these as different yet overlapping activities.

The ambiguity surrounding CEs has led to uncertainty regarding how, when and why to conduct CEs within scoping reviews and reviews of scoping reviews have suggested that CEs are underused in scoping reviews [6-8]. For example, Pham et al found that CEs were only reported in 38.9% of 344 scoping reviews included [6]. A recent critical review of CEs in scoping reviews also showed a lack of consensus regarding how to conduct and report a CE within scoping reviews, with limited understanding of the value they can bring [8]. As such, we do not know the impact of knowledge user CEs in scoping reviews, who should be involved, how and when CEs should be conducted and the barriers and enablers to their use in scoping reviews. Understanding and implementing best practices for the conduct of CEs is impeded by this lack of understanding.

Interventions and comparators
Intervention 1: We will use purposeful sampling to select authors of scoping reviews who have reported the conduct of a CE, and to achieve wide variation in the country of the corresponding author, year of publication, method used for the consultation exercise (e.g. focus groups, survey) and type of knowledge user involved (e.g. policymakers, patients). Authors of scoping reviews who have used Arksey and O'Malley [5], Levac et al [6] and/or JBI guidance [9] and have included knowledge user consultations will be invited to participate in interviews. Participants will be

identified from two recent overviews of scoping reviews [4, 10]. These overviews will provide our sampling frame (n=81) because they (1) have been conducted recently (2020, 2022) (in an attempt to reduce recall bias), (2) have included scoping reviews across a variety of disciplines and topics (e.g. rehabilitation, health and social care research broadly) and (3) were identified as having included a CE.

Index Type:

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator
Not applicable.

Outcome measures
Primary: not applicable.
Secondary:

Analysis plans
We will perform reflexive thematic analysis of the collected data to identify the underlying themes. This form of analysis was chosen because it is an accessible method that allows teams of researchers to explore, identify and develop patterns of understanding and meaning from a qualitative dataset. Reflexive thematic analysis incorporates six stages [10]. The first two stages, familiarisation with the dataset and coding, will be conducted by two study authors independently. This will be done initially with two transcripts and discussed with a third study author. The coding will be done using NVivo software. Following coding, the three study authors will generate, develop and review the initial themes (stages 3 and 4) for review by the study team. The fifth stage of refining, defining and naming themes will be based on reflexive discussions among the study team, before the sixth stage of writing up the findings.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAR
Recruiting a sufficient number of authors of scoping reviews and recall bias in interviews.

References
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Publications or presentations of this SWAR design
O'Connell N, Toomey E, Houghton C, Tricco A, Smith M, O'Meara C, Pollock D. Exploring Consultation Exercises in Scoping Reviews (protocol). OSFHOME 15 June 2023. Available at https://osf.io/kxajp/ (accessed 21 August 2023).

Examples of the implementation of this SWAR