Case Studies

# Chapter 10: Systematic reviews

In the case study, students have been set a review research assignment. Simone wants to find out the latest research on the link between Type-2 diabetes and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). She feels that a narrative review may be sufficient for this as it will feature the latest research and include opinion pieces which she is interested in.

Simone discusses this with Rachel who thinks that a systematic review would be a more comprehensive approach – this will still include grey literature, but the review as a whole has less risk of bias than a narrative review. Rachel reminds Simone that this won’t necessarily return ‘better’ evidence, but it will identify any gaps in the research and use a method that can be built upon or repeated consistently.

Simone decides to proceed with a systematic review. She draws up a plan to follow the following process, as outlined in Chapter 10:

 Define a focused clinical question (PICO)

 Identify all relevant published and unpublished evidence

 Select studies for inclusion

 Assess the quality of each study

 Synthesise and interpret the findings

 Present an impartial summary of the findings.

* Can you add a description of the criteria for each of these stages of the systematic review process? What needs to be considered at each stage?
* Write a brief description of the meta-analysis and meta-synthesis and the different applications of each.