Case Studies

# Chapter 13: Literature review: Identifying and sourcing the literature

Case study student Yoshi wants to conduct a literature search for a research paper he is writing on how the initial GP assessment impacts the long-term treatment outcomes for transgender patients. He realises this is quite a broad area of research, so conducts some background reading, and after learning more about intersectionality, he decides to narrow his research to look at the impact of the initial GP assessment on the longer-term outcomes for BAME transgender patients who are seeking gender reassignment surgery. When defining outcomes, Yoshi wants to look at both the physical (treatment) and psychological outcomes and how the initial GP assessment influences these. He uses this information to form a research question. He does not formulate a PICO as his research will be qualitative.

Yoshi allows 3 hours for his initial literature search, using the Medline database. He is aware of the need to include grey literature as there may be clinical trials or studies which will provide useful qualitative data. Yoshi therefore also searches the Kings Fund Information and Library Service in a separate research session. He uses the PRISMA framework to record the records and decide which to include or discard. He reads the abstracts to make this selection.

Yoshi considers using Mendeley as a reference management system, but as a lot of his references are from grey literature, he needs to register them manually. When he comes to write up his research paper, Yoshi first summarizes all of his references in a separate document, with notes against each, so that he can quickly find them and copy and paste the reference details into his report as he writes. He is really glad he learnt this tip as it saves him a lot of time, which he can use to proofread before he submits the report – something that he didn’t do on his last assignment, where he lost marks for incomplete references.

* Do you think that Yoshi was right to form a research question rather than a PICO for this paper? Why? How could he turn this area of research into a PICO?
* Identify the four PRISMA steps and describe what is included within each step.
* Advice on the best method for managing each of the following types of references:
* References for older material which is not available online
* Large sets of references
* Journal references