Case Studies

# Chapter 25: Writing a professional research proposal

Rachel is submitting a research proposal to her university to answer the following question:

*‘Is there an increased risk of lactic acidosis when taking metformin in diabetic patients who drink > 4 units of alcohol per day?’*

Rachel comes up with a research proposal, structured as follows:

 Introduction and rationale

 Background

 Methodology

 Population, sample, sample size, data collection and analysis

 Plan for gaining ethical approval

She is concerned about the ethics of her plan to conduct an RCT where one group of patients need to drink quantities of alcohol which could produce a negative result. Rachel decides to seek a mentor to advise her on the best methodology and ethical considerations.

When executing her research plan, Rachel keeps a research diary. She notes down meetings and mentoring sessions and key things people said. She also reflects on how her thinking evolves – something she finds easiest to do by recording voice memos on her phone when she is out walking. She jots down references for books and articles she reads and bookmarks these on her laptop. She finds this diary really useful when writing up her research, particularly when explaining her methodology and compiling her references.

* What else would Rachel need to include in her research proposal if she was submitting a proposal for funding?
* Define ‘equipoise’ and analyze how it applies to Rachel’s research question.
* What methods of recording information do you think will best suit your learning and research style when keeping your own research diary?