Developing search strategies for evidence on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). A preliminary study

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What was the problem?

- We needed to identify evidence for a systematic mapping review for the Wellcome Trust
- The research question was about how equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues are considered within health research from the perspective of research participants, topics and researchers
- EDI are important but ill defined concepts which are increasingly valued in research
- There is no EDI search filter to readily identify evidence but filters/strategies exist for LGBT[1], age[2], gender[3] , hard to reach groups[4] and minority ethnic groups[5]

What did we do?

- We developed a set of EDI terms to use for database searches
- Our set of EDI terms included diversity, inclusion, exclusion, equality, equity, inequality, inequity, disparity, disadvantage, discrimination, bias and equal opportunity
- Database searches were supplemented by expert opinion, citation searching and reference checking
- The list of included studies was scrutinised to see whether using our EDI terms, terms relating to key EDI concepts or validated search filters would have been more fruitful in identifying studies

What did we find?

- 246 studies were included in the review
- 94 would have been identified using the EDI terms (the most frequently used term was disparity)
- 20 would have been identified using the published search filters (the best performing was the LGBT filter)
- 89 would have been identified using race or ethnicity or gender or women or female (the most frequently used term was gender)

Limitations?

- Evidence examined at title level only
- The three approaches have not been compared in database searches to date – results from these may differ
- Differences in concepts between US and the UK
- Search filters often designed to identify clinical papers

Where next?

- Searching for evidence on equality, diversity and inclusion is most efficient when using EDI terms
- EDI concepts such as race, ethnicity and gender could be added to searches without limiting efficiency
- Equity frameworks such as PROGRESS[6] could be used to develop strategies to identify EDI evidence

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