

EPC Associate Editor Guide for Reviewing Evidence Reports

The purpose of the Associate Editor Guide is to assist the Associate Editors and Task Order Officers in being more consistent about assessing major issues that may affect the usefulness and credibility of evidence reports. The guide focuses attention on issues that are particularly important to address before submitting an evidence report for peer and public review, to the extent that problems in a report could reflect poorly on the EPC authors or the EHC Program as a whole. These items should be addressed routinely in the comments that Associate Editors prepare for the authors of evidence reports. The Associate Editor should explicitly state whether any concerns about these issues need to be addressed prior to sending a report to peer/public review or if the EPC can address the issues in revisions after peer/public review. The Associate Editors and Task Order Officers should be aware of the items that will be reviewed by the Eisenberg Center, as well as the items that were considered when the protocol was previously reviewed by the Task Order Officers.

Note: This guide is for quality assessment, not reporting. The operating question—with applicability or publication bias, for example—is not merely, “Was this done?” but rather “Was it done well?”

Major Issues to Consider (other issues can be reviewed at the Associate Editor’s discretion):

1. Abstract
 - a. Is it written clearly enough for the targeted audience?
 - b. Are conclusions clear?
 - c. Is there any selection bias in what outcomes or conclusions are presented?
2. Executive Summary
 - a. Does it need to be edited by a technical writer for adherence to the EPC Program’s content guidance, or to improve clarity and accuracy of the text?
 - b. Does it appear to be free of bias in the selection of studies, synthesis of data, and formulation of conclusions?
 - c. Are all key questions addressed?
 - d. Does it present the main story effectively?
 - e. Are conclusions clear and supported by the data?
 - f. Is the terminology used in conclusions appropriate and adequately supported (e.g., equivalent/non-equivalent, inferior/non-inferior, adequate/inadequate, sufficient/insufficient, or no evidence)?
 - g. Does it include a thoughtful assessment of applicability?
 - h. Is it free of clinical recommendations?
3. Methods section
 - a. Was a comprehensive search strategy used?
 - b. Were the eligibility criteria clear?
 - c. Were appropriate methods used to assess the quality of individual studies?
 - d. Were the methods of data synthesis appropriate?
 - e. Does the report need a statistical reviewer?
 - f. Was publication bias assessed?
4. Summary of Strength of Evidence
 - a. Did the authors grade the strength of evidence in a manner consistent with the Methods Guide of the EPC Program?
 - b. Do all important comparisons and outcomes have grades?
5. PRISMA Checklist
 - a. The SRC will ensure that the authors submit a completed PRISMA checklist and will alert the AE to any deviations, omissions, or exceptions.