

# CRITICAL APPRAISAL SKILLS PROGRAMME

## Making sense of evidence about clinical effectiveness



### 11 questions to help you make sense of a trial

These questions consider the following:

*Are the results of the trial valid? (SECTION A)*

*What are the results? (SECTION B)*

*Will the results help locally? (SECTION C)*

A number of italicised prompts are given after each question. These are designed to remind you why the question is important. There will not be time in the small groups to answer them all in detail!

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# A/ Are the results of the trial valid?

## Screening Questions

<p><b>1 Did the trial address a clearly focused issue?</b></p> <p><i>An issue can be 'focused' in terms of</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the population studied</li> <li>- the intervention given</li> <li>- the comparator given</li> <li>- the outcomes considered</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>Can't tell</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p><b>2 Was the assignment of patients to treatments randomized?</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>Can't tell</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p><b>3 Were all of the patients who entered the trial properly accounted for at its conclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- was follow up complete?</li> <li>- were patients analysed in the groups to which they were randomised?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>Can't tell</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>

## Detailed Questions

<p><b>4 Were patients, health workers and study personnel 'blind' to treatment?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- were the patients</li> <li>- were the health workers</li> <li>- were the study personnel</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>Can't tell</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p><b>5 Were the groups similar at the start of the trial?</b></p> <p><i>In terms of other factors that might effect the outcome such as age, sex, social class</i></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>Can't tell</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p><b>6 Aside from the experimental intervention, were the groups treated equally?</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>Can't tell</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>

## B/ What are the results?

<p><b>7 How large was the treatment effect?</b></p> <p><i>What outcomes are measured?</i></p>	
<p><b>8 How precise was the estimate of the treatment effect?</b></p> <p><i>What are its confidence limits?</i></p>	

## C/ Will the results help locally?

<p><b>9 Can the results be applied to the local population?</b></p> <p><i>Do you think that the patients covered by the trial are similar enough to your population?</i></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>Can't tell</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p><b>10 Were all clinically important outcomes considered?</b></p> <p><i>If not, does this affect the decision?</i></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>		<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p><b>11 Are the benefits worth the harms and costs?</b></p> <p><i>This is unlikely to be addressed by the trial. But what do you think?</i></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>		<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>