Action research: a systematic review and guidance for assessment
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Record Status
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Citation

Authors' objectives
1. To provide a definition of action research. 2. To identify action research projects conducted in UK healthcare settings. 3. To analyse the identified action research in relation to: - project aims - reasons for choosing action research - issues addressed by action research - outcomes and impacts - strengths and limitations. 4. To develop guidance for the assessment of action research proposals and reports.

Authors' conclusions
Action research is a complex research process that has been used in a wide variety of healthcare settings in the UK. A number of definitions of action research are currently being applied to the methodology. The definition provided here includes the major components of an action research methodology.

This definition emphasises the importance of 'involvement' in the action research process, which is consistent with the emphasis in NHS policy to increase the active participation of users of services in their care. However, few users were involved in the studies included in this review.

The review suggests that action research is being used and has the potential to play a role in achieving the goals of the NHS. Specifically, the methodology has the potential to be useful in areas such as developing innovation, improving healthcare, developing knowledge and understanding in practitioners, and involvement in users and staff.

The findings indicate that action research is suited to developing innovative practices and services over a wide range of healthcare situations. The review demonstrates how the action research process can assist in the establishment of an environment that promotes the generation and development of creative ideas and implementation of changes in practice.

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