eMERGe Meta-ethnography Reporting Guideline

Introducing the New Meta-Ethnography Reporting Guidance
What it is and how to use it

Transcript of an online webinar delivered using Blackboard Collaborate on Monday, 22nd May 2017. Main Presenter: Nicola Ring (Edinburgh Napier university)

Slide 1 – Title Slide (00:00)

Hi and welcome to this webinar introducing the new meta-ethnography reporting guidance, what it is and how to use it. I'd like to welcome everybody to this session because there are a lot of people who are actually in in the online room from across the UK but several other countries as well. And there was a lot of interest in people attending this seminar today but obviously some people couldn't attend due to the timescales, depending on which country they were in. We do plan to repeat a webinar like this later on in the year once the guidance is actually launched.

I'm Nicola Ring and I'm a member of the eMERGe Project Team, and although you can't see them, there's another member of the team with me in the room and there's also members [of the team] online in the Collaborate session as well.

Production of the eMERGe meta reporting guidance was funded by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) and it was a two-year project that started at the end of June 2015 and finished at the end of this month [May] in 2017, so the project is almost, but not quite, finished.

Slide 2 – Project Team (01:13)

eMERGe is a collaboration of several UK universities and the team members and their affiliations are shown here. However, the eMERGe project and the development of the meta-ethnography (or 'ME') reporting guidance has been about more than just the project team. We've been really fortunate throughout the two years, and in fact even before, that we have been supported by a large Project Advisory Group , or 'PAG' and the PAG has consisted of a wide range of stakeholders from academic experts, professionals to potential end users and also those representing lay and patient groups. And we have been fortunate that we have had participants in the PAG from across the UK but also many countries internationally as well. So the academic experts have contributed their specialist knowledge, that might be on the use of meta-ethnography but it could be that their specialist knowledge is in a related area, like, for example searching for evidence to synthesise. And also the academic experts in the PAG have been networked and connected to other international initiatives in the field of qualitative evidence as well, so that's been hugely important to us during the eMERGe project.

But, for us, what's also been important is that we have had a huge range of other potential eMERGe guidance users involved in our PAG. So, for example, people who represent organisations that develop clinical guidelines, or health technology assessments, or health policy. And, perhaps even more importantly, those representing patient and lay organisations who want to make sure that the views and voices of patients and service users are actually captured And do inform policy and practice. So we wish to acknowledged the support of the PAG throughout the two years of our project.

It's intended that the eMERGe reporting guidance, the meta-ethnography reporting guidance, will be simultaneously published later this year. So this webinar is happening ahead of publication, just before the project ends. So I'm sure you'll appreciate that we cannot issue you with hard copies of the final documentation because that's not been published yet. We cannot give you exact copies of the information, we can only provide you with some examples because this is an early introduction to the meta-ethnography reporting guidance.

The other thing I should say is that this is not a seminar on meta-ethnography, but it's a very mixed audience, both in the room today and those who will be listening to the recording after the seminar. So I do need to say a little bit about meta-ethnography, just to set the context, because we're aware that some people will be less familiar with this methodology than others.

Slide 3 – What is meta-ethnography? (04:21)

Meta-ethnography is one method of synthesising qualitative evidence for health policy and practice. There are other approaches, but several reviews have highlighted that meta-ethnography is the approach that is used most often.

Meta-ethnography, or 'ME', was developed in the 1980s by George Noblit and Dwight Hare, and that's a picture [shown on slide] of George who I'm delighted to say became an honorary member of the project group. Unfortunately, Dwight Hare passed away some years ago. As I say, we're really pleased and delighted to have George as an honorary member of our project group.

Meta-ethnography is an advanced, qualitative methodology and it's basically bringing together single, stand-along qualitative research studies that can have a small number of participants and bringing their findings together, synthesising them, to create a stronger weight of evidence to support practice and policy.

Meta-ethnography is a process of making the whole into something more than the parts alone imply. So it's going beyond the findings reported in the original studies to create something new.

Slide 4 – The 7 Phases of meta-ethnography (05:49)

Now, meta-ethnography has been described as being in seven phases, but in practice these phases overlap, they can run in parallel and they can go backwards and forwards. So, I'm not going into detail about these seven phases, but I just want to say a little bit about phases five and six because they are especially important in meta-ethnography reporting.

Phase Five is about systematically comparing the meaning, concepts and themes in the different individual studies, taking into account their different contexts. It's about identifying common concepts in the individual studies and looking to see whether different studies report or share the same meaning, albeit perhaps expressed in a different terminology or labelled in different formats but essentially the meaning is shared. That's reciprocal translation. It's also about considering whether different concepts and different studies contradict or refute one another and that is refutational translation.

Phase six is about determining whether our common translated concepts from phase five can be compared further with one another to see if some translations or concepts can be synthesised reach a new, over-arching interpretation and if so if they can then go on to develop a new theory, conceptual framework or model. It's phase six that differentiates meta-ethnography from literature review and simple sematic analysis.

Slide 5 – Why is meta-ethnography reporting guidance needed? (07:33)

So, why is meta-ethnography reporting guidance needed? It's needed because meta-ethnography was developed in the 1980s for use in educational research, but it's increasingly being used in health research, and in recent years its use has actually taken off. However, having said that, it's still a young field in comparison to the synthesis of quantitative [inaudible] evidence that is much more established.

However, although meta-ethnography is a young field, it's already recognised that too many meta-ethnography reports, for example in journal articles, lack transparency and are very variable in their quality. This has several consequences. It's not clear to readers whether a journal paper labelled 'meta-ethnography' is an actual one. So, for example, researchers might report a literature review, or they might simply present a summary of the themes from the original studies, and they don't go on to produce a new, over-arching interpretation or a new theory or a new model. That's not to say they didn't do one, but in their report they do not articulate how they did phases five and six.

It also means that poor meta-ethnography reports are difficult to assess in terms of their quality and the credibility of studies. Now, this is problematic for those experienced or knowledgeable about the field of meta-ethnography, but it's even more problematic for people who are new to the field, whether junior researchers or people like journal editors and journal reviewers who are having to make a decision about whether or not to publish a manuscript reporting a meta-ethnography.

But what's really important is that when readers lack confidence in meta-ethnography findings and reports as they're not certain that what they are reading has come from a high-quality, robustly-conducted meta-ethnography it reduces the potential of these findings to be then utilised and to inform health policy and practice. And this is what makes it really, really important because meta-ethnography has huge potential to use the views of patients, carers and other service users and to capture these so they can inform health care and clinical decision making. That can't be done if the findings lack credibility or lack quality and therefore people can't use them.

In recent years there's been recognition of the need to enhance research reporting generally. For example in recent years there's been research reporting guidance produce by PRISMA [Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses] and also from ENTREQ [Enhancing Transparency in Reporting the Synthesis of Qualitative Research], but there are others as well. So there is a recognition generally the meta-ethnography reporting guidance needs to be improved and although there are other reporting guidance that other people can use, for example ENTREQ which is for reporting of qualitative evidence synthesis generally, if a meta-ethnography uses ENTREQ findings, or ENTREQ's guidance, it could still mean that the meta-ethnography report might still lack transparency from the specific perspective of meta-ethnography because ENTREQ is guidance for [inaudible] synthesis generally.

Slide 6 – Guidance Development Process (11:11)

So, how did we develop our eMERGe reporting guidance? Well, this was a two-year process, but to summarise it in one slide and a few minutes, this is briefly what we did. We first of all reviewed the existing guidance on the conduct and reporting of meta-ethnography. Now, that was a huge volume of information that we read and it included theoretical texts, like the seminal blue book but also other seminal journal papers in the field, so maybe seminal meta-ethnography journal papers.

That review provided a wealth of information on what could be considered to be best practice guidance and recommendations in meta-ethnography conduct and reporting. After we had identified what could be considered to be good practice, the recommendations, we then moved into stage two. What we did was converted the recommended best practice and guidance identified from stage one and converted that into draft, provisional reporting standards. And that was so we could systematically audit a sample of published meta-ethnography against these reporting criteria. So, basically, when you have got an audit all that you are doing is that you have got your standards, which outline best practice, and you are comparing best practice with actual practice which was in the meta-ethnography reports. So mainly we just wanted to use the audit reporting standards to enable us to systematically review a sample of published meta-ethnographies to see how they compared with best practice that had come out from stage one.

The audit had 109 (one hundred and nine) standards, so that was a huge amount if standards for any audit. The vast majority of those applied to every study that we audited, but some, like for example policy appraisal, were optional. The audit standards also reflected the seven phases of meta-ethnography. Now, it's only the research team who used the audit standards. So the audit standards have a clear, specific role in stage two.

After the audit, we then moved to stage three and we tested the meta-ethnography reporting best practice by taking it to potential users in an online Delphi. And so to do that we converted the audit standards into a format suitable for use in the online Delphi. We were also conscious that the Delphi included a wide range of stakeholders, some who had an expertise in meta-ethnography and many who didn't but were likely to use the findings, perhaps in guideline development or perhaps because they represented a patient group.

So, in the Delphi we tested best practice in the preliminary reporting items. In stage three we converted the audit standards, of which remember we had 109, and we converted these into 59 (fifty-nine) reporting items that we then took out to the potential users in our online Delphi. The reason that we were able to reduce the reporting items down to a more manageable 59 was that we moved away from using the meta-ethnography phases for the Delphi. Instead, we used journal subject headings like 'introduction', 'method', 'findings' and 'discussion'. We felt that would fit better with our participants who were representing a wide range of stakeholders. But the advantage of moving to using journal headings for the Delphi was that because meta-ethnography is an iterative process and because the phases of them overlap was that what we found in the audit was that many of the audit standards often duplicated or were very similar between the different phases.

In phase three we were testing the preliminary best practice guidance amongst potential users in an online Delphi and we took the preliminary reporting items to 62 (sixty two) Delphi participants who voted on the reporting criteria over three rounds to determine consensus on which reporting items should then be transferred into the final reporting guidance.

In stage four, after the Delphi, with input from the Project Advisory Group, we had then to turn the reporting items that were used, just in the Delphi, into our final reporting criteria. This was a very complex and iterative process. We had to ensure that the final reporting criteria were in a format that would be useable to a wide range of potential end users and we also had to be conscious of the needs of the people who would potentially be using the reporting guidance.

We also needed to make sure that the reporting criteria and guidance at the end were seen, as I say, as being useable and in a format that would help end users. So, in the final reporting guidance we have retained an emphasis on being meta-ethnography specific. The final reporting guidance has moved back to a format that reflects the seven phases of meta-ethnography. Again, based on the feedback that came from the Delphi and from the Project Advisory Group it was felt that that was necessary because otherwise it would not help enhance transparency round about phases five and six in particular.

So, just a quick summary there then. We reviewed the existing good practice guidance, we created audit standards which we then used to audit a sample of meta-ethnographies to compare actual reporting practice against good practice in the standards. We then tested the preliminary reporting items in our online Delphi which had 62 participants over three rounds and then after the Delphi we went through quite along, lengthy, stressful, time-consuming and laborious process to convert the reporting items into the final reporting criteria.

[Attendee question]: I was just wondering, were there any particular meta-ethnography papers that as you were going through were the gold standard that you could advise us all to have a look at?

Well, certainly there are key seminal texts and journal papers in the field that we can recommend people look at and I'm going to talk about them a bit more later on but certainly in the reports and also the journal paper when it appears later on in the year will identify some examples then. What we found was that sometimes some papers are very good at reporting maybe a particular phase or phases but were then less good sometimes in reporting other phases in meta-ethnography. So sometimes what you find is that some papers have particular reporting strengths and so they might be best practice for certain phases, but maybe less helpful in later phases. That's maybe a roundabout answer but what I would say is that when the reporting guidance comes out later in the year in journal publications there will be references and links made to where we think there are examples of good practice.

Slide 7 – Who is the Meta-Ethnography Reporting Guidance For? (19:55)

Who is the meta-ethnography reporting guidance for? A range of users. Clearly researchers who are conducting or planning to conduct meta-ethnography, whether they are doing it as an individual, stand-alone synthesis or they are doing a meta-ethnography perhaps alongside a systematic review of trials. They are also going to be relevant clearly to PhD students and their supervisors and we know from people attending this webinar today that that is a key audience and target group.

But we also know that the guidance is going to be relevant to those who are likely to use the findings of meta-ethnography to inform decision making in practice. So, for example: those who are developing clinical guidelines, health technology assessments or health policy; those who need to be able to make some assessment about the transparency of the reporting of the meta-ethnography so they can make an informed judgement about whether or not to incorporate the findings from that meta-ethnography into their guideline or health technology assessment.

Another key group is going to be journal editors and reviewers because they are clearly going to have to know what constitutes good reporting in meta-ethnography when they are deciding to publish a paper reporting these findings.

Another very important group for us is those representing patient groups and lay organisations, groups that will want to ensure that their own policy, their strategic documents or whatever reflect the views of patients and service users. So what's important is that he meta-ethnography reporting guidance is potentially relevant to a wide range of people. It should not just be seen as being an academic tool.

I want to look now at the meta-ethnography reporting guidance and you'll understand that because this is an ahead-of-publication webinar that we can't give you the specific guidance just now, we can't issue you with copies until it's published later in the year, but we will just give you and overview and an idea of the format and content.

Slide 8 – The eMERGe Reporting Guidance (22:11)

The eMERGe Reporting Guidance consists of three parts. There's Part One, which is the Guidance Table, which is really a summary of the reporting criteria. There's Part Two, which is the Explanatory Notes, which provide additional supporting information and also which relates to the question earlier from Ria [webinar attendee]. It gives you some appropriate, underpinning references. And then also Part Three: Extensions to the Reporting Criteria. These refer to aspects that may or may not apply to a meta-ethnography report, depending on the context of the study. The reporting criteria are not intended to be a simple checklist, so it's important users are aware of and refer to the full three parts of the guidance. I'm going to say more, shortly, about parts two and three, but I want to start by looking at part one first.

Slide 9 – Part 1 – Guidance Table (23:16)

Part one is a guidance table and this is a summary of the reporting criteria only. It's been deliberately designed to be one page, as we thought that would be helpful for users to have an at-a-glance summary. There are in total 19 reporting criteria in the guidance table and these reporting criteria are common to all meta-ethnography reports. Now, we are not saying that the reporting criteria are mandatory, but they are evidence-based, and therefore we would advise or recommend their use.

The meta-ethnography reporting guidance also reflects the seven phases of meta-ethnography. Now, we know that meta-ethnography is an iterative process, so we're not saying that you have to apply meta-ethnography in a linear approach, we are not advocating that at all. But by using the seven phases of meta-ethnography as our structure for the guidance table, it allows us to indicate where we think a particular reporting criteria may best fit with a particular phase. So, we are not saying that a particular reporting criterion must always be reported at a particular phase, but we appreciate that there might be times that a particular meta-ethnography report, they might provide some information maybe in a different phase from where we have indicated it might sit. That does not matter, but what does matter is that the 19 reporting criteria that feature in the guidance table, that that information is provided in a report, because this is the information that is needed to make a meta-ethnography report transparent, and it helps readers.

The guidance table is methodologically specific. It does, as I say, focus around the seven meta-ethnography phases. We did consider at one point creating the guidance table around the format or structure of the journal and reports section headings, so we did consider structuring the guidance table according to what you would expect in the introduction, the method and the findings sections of a report but we realised, and based on feedback from others, that that format would be too generic and it would not reflect the information that people need to provide to make a meta-ethnography report transparent. Particularly, we needed information that ensured that reporting of phases five and six was more comprehensive than it is at the moment.

However, we recognised and were aware that some people, for example journal reviewers, may not be experts in meta-ethnography but they may still be using the eMERGe reporting guidance. So, for some users like that we appreciate they would like to understand which part of a meta-ethnography report that a particular report item could appear under. So what we have done is we have linked the reporting criteria to where we think that information might sit in a journal paper or a report, in terms of the section headings. Now, what I'll l do is I am going to show you an example from the guidance table just now, I'll explain that and then I'll ask if there are any points of clarification.

Slide 10 – Reporting Example 1 (27:06)

This is an example of two of the reporting criteria from phase one of the guidance table. Each of the reporting criteria are numbered, so these two are the first two in the guidance table, the first two of four in phase one. The criteria heading refers readers to which meta-ethnography phase it relates to. So you can see this example is from phase one. And one thing I should say at this point is that we have modified the name of the original phase one as it appears in the blue book. In the blue book phase one is simply 'Getting Started' but we have refined it to specifically say now, 'Selecting meta-ethnography and getting started'. And that's simply because we know from the work that we have done that often in meta-ethnography reports people don't specifically say why they chose meta-ethnography over other methods of qualitative evidence synthesis. When that information is missing, readers of a meta-ethnography report often find it hard to understand whether a review's aims and questions are actually congruent with a meta-ethnography approach.

I can see a point of clarification from Ruth Jepson, by 'the blue book' I mean the original blue book by Noblit and Hare.

So, you can see in this example I have given you here, the first two reporting criteria are about the rationale, the context and the aims of the meta-ethnography. And we believe that that is best suited to appear in the introduction section of a journal paper or a journal report.

So, phase one, the reporting criteria are relatively straightforward to understand, but they may be less so in other phases of the process, so people using the eMERGe reporting guidance will need more information in terms of understanding what they should report.

I'm going to go on now to give another example referring to the explanatory notes and their purpose.

Slide 11 – Reporting Example 2 (29:31)

This example is from phrase five of the meta-ethnography reporting guidance, translating studies into one another. And we know that phase five is one of the areas of meta-ethnography reports that is lacking in transparency. There are only two reporting criteria in phase five, and this is both of them here, and both relate to the process and the outcomes of translation. We would expect that details for the reporting of criteria 13 would appear in the methods section of a report or a journal paper, and that information for reporting criteria 14 would appear in the findings section of a journal paper or report.

If you look specifically at criteria 13 you will see that what meta-ethnographers are asked to report is only briefly stated in the guidance table. For example, it just says, describe how you preserve the context and meaning between concepts, describe how translation was conducted, reciprocal and refutational and describe alternative interpretations or explanations, how these were considered. So, what we would say that the reporting criteria in the guidance table indicate the reporting of a specific issue is really important but you can see from this example it doesn't actually really tell you how you go about doing that, it doesn't give you more information. It gives you the highlighted points – this is the information we would like you to provide at this point but it doesn't give too much detail.

At this point, that's when users of the eMERGe reporting guidance would then look at the extensions in part two.

Slide 12 – Part 2 – Explanatory Notes (31:33)

Part Two of the reporting guidance. The explanatory notes provide additional information that give details of how you would apply the reporting criteria. Each of the 19 reporting criteria in the guidance table has an explanatory note, and so for each one you will find there's details of the type of information that would be helpful to provide tat that point to improve transparency of reporting. And, as I also mentioned earlier, it provides supporting references. What we found when we did the stage one review of good practice and the audit was that sometimes some meta-ethnography reports are excellent examples of maybe reporting in phases 1 to 4 or 1 to 5, but are maybe less good at reporting in phases 5 and 6. Or sometimes so reports are maybe less good at the earlier phases but are excellent examples of how to report a translation. So the explanatory notes give people further information about supporting references or good practice examples that we think are helpful.

Staying with the example from the reporting guidance I have just given you, phase five, reporting criterion 13, the explanatory notes then give you information about the type of narrative that could be provided which would help you indicate how a context was preserved during a translation. So, perhaps, somebody might report that they related studies by health conditions or by a time period and that they translated sub groups of papers.

The explanatory notes, again, give indication about the types of visual aids that could be used to indicate relationships between concepts. Things like mind maps, grids, tables. The explanatory notes also suggest possible ways of how translation could be conducted; for example, at study level, or within studies. And they also provide prompts about how reporters might have considered different ways for alternative interpretations or explanations of how these were considered. For example, a team of meta-ethnographers may have considered alternative explanations from the perspective of gender or culture or setting of the original participants in the original studies.

This is just to illustrate how parts one and two of the guidance come together and complement each other. So part one the guidance table is really the summary, it's the highlighted, main points of the information that's required to maximise the transparency and quality of the meta-ethnography report, but it's high-level, very succinct, summarised information. Part two provides the details and explanatory notes that give us much more indication about the information that is required.

Slide 13 – Reporting Example 3 (34:37)

So, I am going to give a third example from the guidance table which is phase seven, expressing the synthesis. There are three reporting criteria in phase seven, but these are just the last two in that phase and in the guidance table overall. We think that both these reporting criteria should both appear in the discussion section of a meta-ethnography report.

I want to talk more now on reporting criteria 18; strengths, limitations and reflexivity. Evidence from our audit and other work highlights that very often when meta-ethnographers are reporting their limitations they reflect on the limitations of the original studies that were included. So they maybe reflect on the small number of participants that were included, or the country the study was conducted in. But few go on to reflect in a much wider way on how they conducted their meta-ethnography and how that might have influenced their interpretation. There's evidence that suggests that meta-ethnography reports are not very good at reflecting on the research process of the meta-ethnography itself, how it was conducted, may have limited the final interpretation.

So in the explanatory notes there's much more additional information saying about how reporting criteria 18 could be replied. And in particular the explanatory notes ask that meta-ethnographers reflect on context of their study, but at two levels: hat they reflect on the internal context, firstly, in terms of how they included studies, both studies that were synthesise, their limitations, and we know that that is generally well done, but we also want people reporting meta-ethnography to report as well on the internal context of their study, but from their perspective, from their processes. So, for example, if they were an all-female team of social scientists working in, say, the UK, we want them to consider how that might have influenced their final interpretation, because you might expect there might be differences in their perspectives when compared with a male team of researchers from, say, America and in a different academic discipline.

So the explanatory notes prompt those reporting meta-ethnography to reflect on their internal context from these two perspectives but also to consider the external context of their meta-ethnography, so to compare the output of their synthesis in the context of the existing literature. For example, did they provide a novel insight, perhaps because it provided a different cultural perspective, or because the work was done from a different temporal context.

Another reason I wanted to focus on phase seven at this point is not just to give you another example of the explanatory notes, but also to make the link to why people might then need to refer to the extensions to the reporting criteria and refer to the extensions to the reporting guidance table. And this is part three, and I wanted to talk a little bit more about these just now.

Slide 14 – Part 3 – Extensions to the reporting criteria (38:15)

Art three of the meta-ethnography reporting guidance is extensions. And these items are reporting issues that may or may not apply to a meta-ethnography report, depending on the context of that study. For example, perhaps a meta-ethnography has been conducted alongside a systematic review of trials or perhaps there might be an expectation, a requirement from a funder that this information is reported. This information may or may not apply to a report, depending on the context of the study. And because of that, that's why this information, although really important, could not be included within the guidance table. There's an element of optionality about it.

The three reporting criteria extensions are: Firstly there's one about the format of the meta-ethnography output, the report. Now, we know that all meta-ethnography should have some kind of output, some kind of report, but we are conscious that the format of that report is going to vary quite considerably and again that depends on the context in which that meta-ethnography was conducted. So, for example, it might depend on the format of a journal and their particular in-house author style. Or it might be the funder of the meta-ethnography might be a patient or a lay organisation and they want the information in a particular format that suits them. So because we know the style and nature of a meta-ethnography report varies, again we couldn't include this information in the main guidance table but instead we have put it in as an extension. This includes information on the format of abstracts and the content of abstracts and also things like the use of the term meta-ethnography in the title and abstract and keywords.

The second extension is assessment of the methodological strengths and limitations of included studies. Now, some people might refer to this as quality appraisal. We know this is a debated issue within meta-ethnography, so again we could not include it in the guidance table because it's not common to all meta-ethnography reports. But, many meta-ethnography reports do provide this information because very often it's required by a funder or it may be required by a journal. So, again, we had to provide information on this type of reporting for those who needed to provide this information in their meta-ethnography report but we could not include it in the main reporting guidance.

The third extension is using GRADE-CERQual to assess confidence in findings from qualitative evidence syntheses. Now, again, this may or may not be relevant to meta-ethnographers and their particular report and again it depends on the context in which the study has been conducted. For example, if a meta-ethnography has been conducted or it's hoped that a meta-ethnography's findings might be incorporated into a guideline or to health technology assessments then it's important that people using the meta-ethnography reporting guidance refer to this extension for more details on this particular aspect. And that extension provides information on the type of details that we would require in a meta-ethnography report and also gives references for example in the Cochrane Library where you would get more information.

What it's important to say here then is that the guidance has got the three parts: part one the guidance table that's the overview, the summary, part two for the details really about type of information that's needed and part three is extensions that may or may not apply.

Slide 15 – Supporting Materials (42:13)

This is an ahead of publication webinar, giving information about the guidance . So, where else can you get other information? It's planned that parts one, two and three will be simultaneously published later this year, 2017, and the provisional title of the paper is shown (Improving reporting of Meta-Ethnography: the eMERGe Reporting Guidance). There will also be our report to funder, which is the National Institute for Health Research, and there will also be other related publications that report different parts of the eMERGe Project and its development processes.

In addition, there are some training materials. In particular, we've produced four short films. Now, these are conversation in style and they feature a junior researcher, Lynn Gilmour, who is, very kindly, shown on her journey of wanting to learn more about eMERGe, about meta-ethnography and about the reporting guidance. In the four films there's one that features George Noblit which gives a bit of an overview about meta-ethnography, its origins and contemporary development. Emma France, who's the principal investigator of the eMERGe Project, she gives the background to the project and talks about development. Jane Noyes, who's a member of the eMERGe team, she talks about the EMERGe Project and reporting guidance and how it fits with other international initiatives, for example CERQual, and she also how journal editors and reviews could use the reporting guidance. And then there's one with myself, which again talks a bit more about the reporting guidance and how you can use it.

The films have been made but they are currently in the editing stage and they'll be available later, in fact we expect in the next few weeks. Those films and the recording of this webinar will be available later from our eMERGe project site (www.emergeproject.org).

Slide 16 – Your Questions (44:10)

There is a little bit of time left, so we are happy to take questions, so if you would like to put your hand up if you have got a question and we can go you, or type in the chat box.

One of the questions that has been typed in from Louise [webinar attendee] is it's difficult to include lots of detail on methods in journal papers due to word limit, and you are absolutely right Louise. That's something that we have experienced ourselves. What we will be suggesting in the paper when it goes to publication is that a lot of this additional information should appear as supplementary online files to the journal paper. Increasingly you will see that even with systematic reviews of trial evidence, you'll see that in addition to the journal paper there's now a lot of additional files that report, say, their PRISMA literature searching etc. So, yes, we are conscious that the journal papers are limited by word count. That's partly why with the guidance tables that's the key points that we think people should report , but we're aware that we can provide additional information in online files.

There's now a point come in about does the main report discuss the relationships between the new guidance and GRADE-CERQual because journals are starting to expect GRADE-CERQual included in meta-ethnography reports. The answer to that is yes, because fortunately through Jane we have had a very clear link to GRADE-CERQual and we have worked hard to make sure the two complement each other. And of course it's one of the extensions, because we're conscious that it's really important. It's difficult trying to give people an overview of something that you don't all have hard copies of, but we wanted to give people an opportunity to hear more while the project is still live.

Right, now that's an interesting point that has come in from Katie [webinar attendee] about are these items considered minimum standards? Standards are usually a requirement, there's an expectation that standards are met. We did have standards, but they were purely in the audit phase of our development. This is reporting guidance and reporting criteria, so we're not saying this is compulsory, we're not saying this has to be done, but what we are saying is that they are evidence-based and certainly we would see them as minimum, core, common reporting items that we would expect to see if people want to ensure that their meta-ethnography report is as transparent as possible to readers and can therefore hopefully be translated through into policy and practice.

How to conduct meta-ethnography, discussion groups for people doing meta-ethnography: Not today. We ourselves have learned a lot about how to conduct meta-ethnography, although that wasn't our primary purpose. This is primarily about reporting because currently we know reporting is really poor and that is impacting on the potential barriers to getting these findings in use in practice. But what we would say is in terms of the conduct, I think the reporting does give some indication, it's good practice in terms in of reporting, but if you look at the reporting guidance it does then give you some suggestions about what good conduct could be too. In that, for example, we know that refutational translation is poorly done at the moment, very few studies do that, and actually we would say that that's really important and that there should be greater emphasis on that than before. And we also know that the context and understanding the context of the individual studies is really, really important. So I think when the guidance comes out it will help, it will give people pointers towards conduct, although that wasn't our primary focus. Emma [France], are you in the room, does anyone else want to answer that from the eMERGe team?

There will also be other publications coming out of the project. It won't be immediate of course, so those will also help provide some guidance in conducting meta-ethnography because our understanding of the approach has really developed over the course of two years, and we've been working alongside Professor George Noblit and the way he thinks about meta-ethnography has changed too. It has moved on a bit since he wrote his book in 1988. So there will be some guidance in the reporting guidance publication, but there will be other publications too to watch out for. We'll put those on the web site as and when they appear.

Thank you Emma. Yes, our focus was meta-ethnography reporting, but we admit ourselves that we learned a huge amount about how to conduct, and I'm certainly keen to do more.

Slide 17 – With Grateful Thanks To (49:22)

I'm conscious of the time and before we finish up what I want to do is acknowledge these people: The NIHR for funding the project over the last two years, Professor George Noblit, honorary member of the eMERGe team, also our huge Project Advisory Group, both the embers and our chair. We could not have done this project without them. Also, the wonderful Steve Boulton who's helped us with our online support for online support, Lynne Gilmour for filming and Lonnie Wright who was our film maker extraordinaire and everybody who has helped us along the way. That at the bottom [of the slide] is a picture of the eMERGe team. That’s the only one there is of is in the real world together because in the main it’s been a virtual project. And also specific thanks to Maggie Cunningham who joined the project at the end of last year to cover for Emma France’s maternity leave.

Just a reminder for people that there is going to be a recording of this webinar that will appear on the eMERGe project web site, and the PDF of the slides and also that’s where you will find the training materials and later on the films.

So, thank you everybody very much, it’s been lovely that you have been able to join in with us today and we wish you all the luck with your own meta-ethnography because that’s presumably why you have joined us today and we look forward to reading their final publications in the future.

Thanks very much, bye.

Slide 18 – References (51:00)

[references slide displayed]

Total webinar recording running time 51:15
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