Introducing the new Meta-Ethnography Reporting Guidance

What it is and how to use it.

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What is meta-ethnography?

Meta-ethnography (ME) developed by George Noblit & Dwight Hare in USA, in field of education.

Noblit & Hare (1988). Meta-ethnography: synthesizing qualitative studies. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.
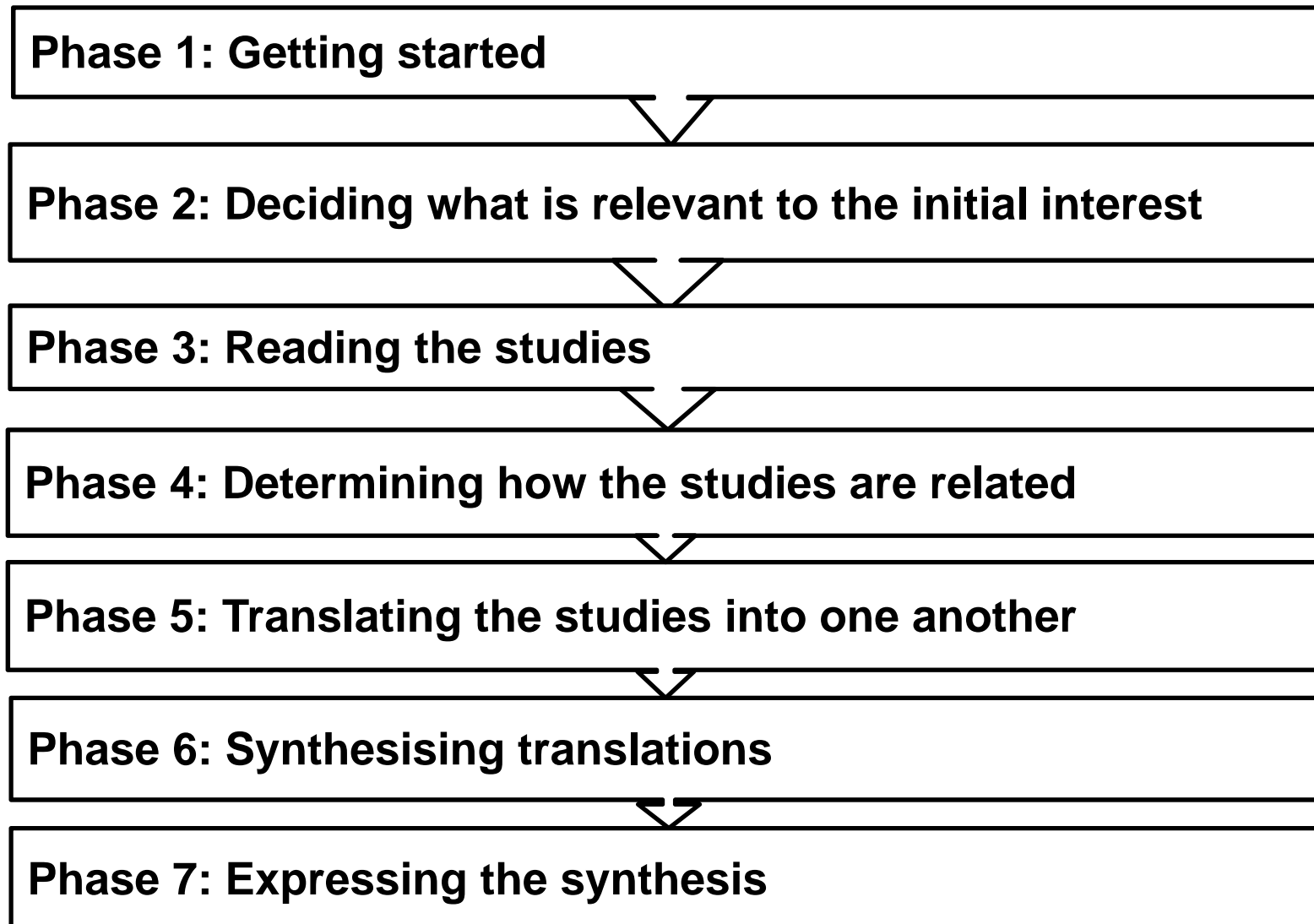
ME – bringing together standalone qualitative research studies to provide a new interpretation.

'Making a whole into something more than the parts alone imply' (1988:28).

George W. Noblit

The 7 phases of a meta-ethnography

Phase 1: Getting started

Phase 2: Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest

Phase 3: Reading the studies

Phase 4: Determining how the studies are related

Phase 5: Translating the studies into one another

Phase 6: Synthesising translations

Phase 7: Expressing the synthesis

Why is ME reporting guidance needed?

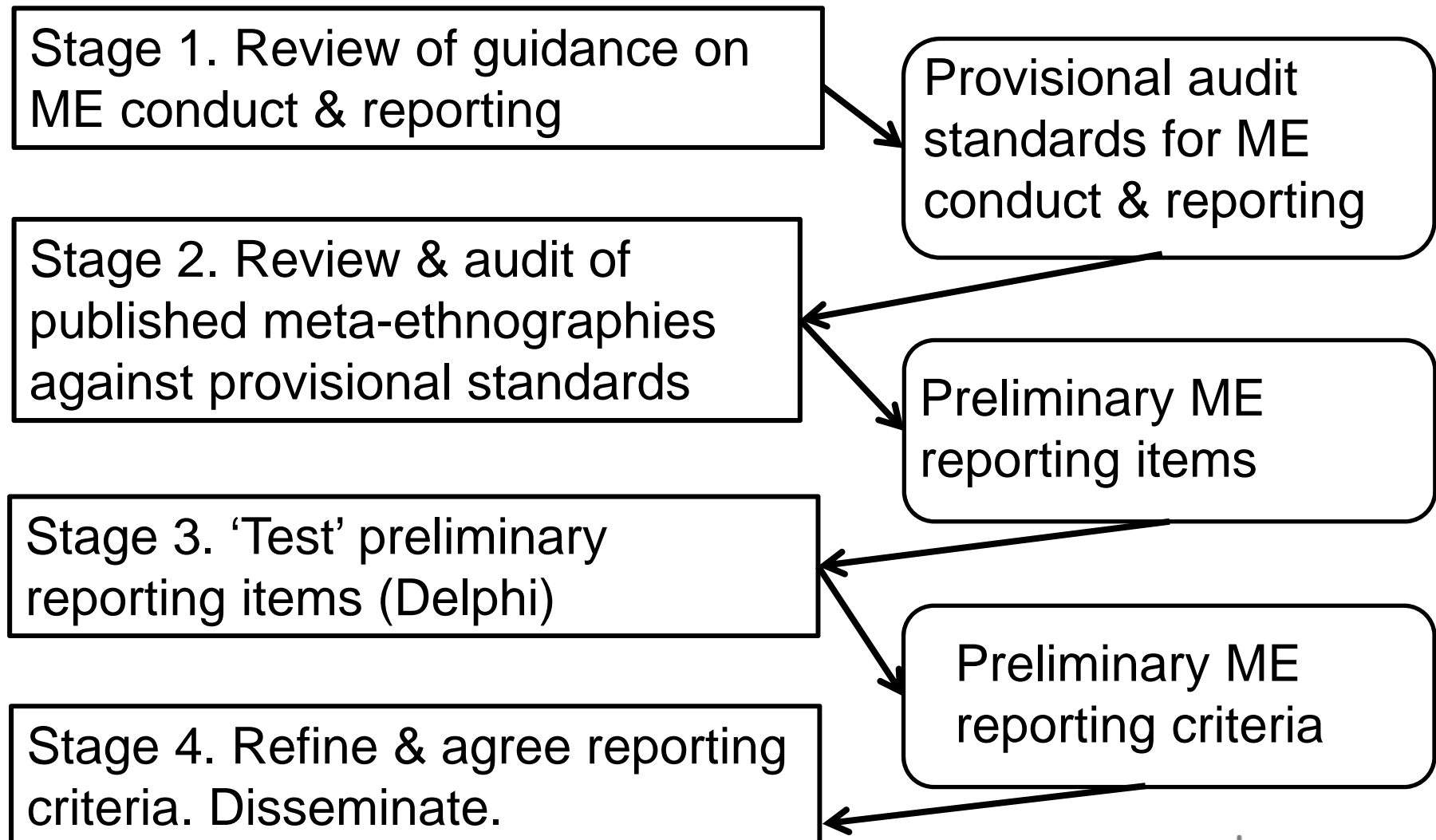ME increasingly used in health research but reporting is highly variable in quality.

This means:
- Some 'ME' reports are so poor its not clear whether what is reported is actually ME.
- ME reports lack transparency so its difficult to assess their quality and credibility.
- Readers lack confidence in some ME findings
- This reduces the potential utility of ME to inform health care practice, policy & research.
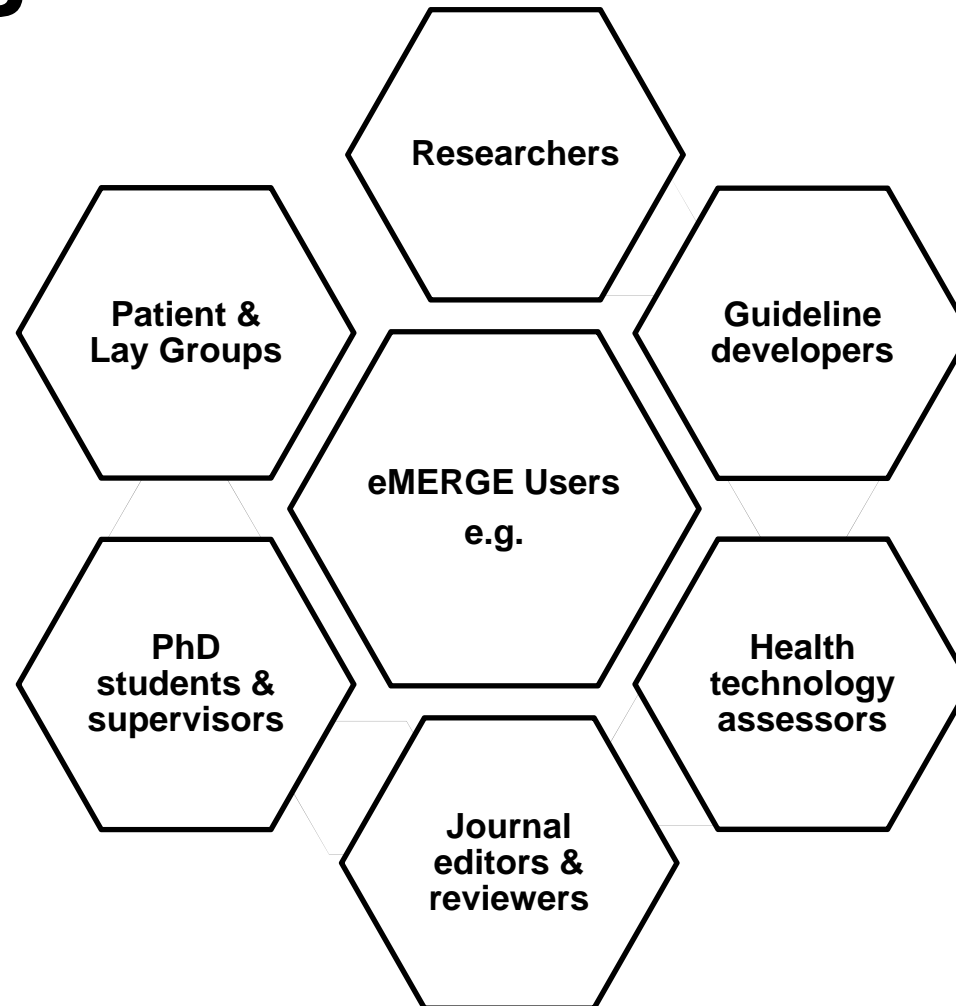
Guidance development process

Stages

Outputs

Stage 1. Review of guidance on ME conduct & reporting

Provisional audit standards for ME conduct & reporting

Stage 2. Review & audit of published meta-ethnographies against provisional standards

Preliminary ME reporting items

Stage 3. 'Test' preliminary reporting items (Delphi)

Preliminary ME reporting criteria

Stage 4. Refine & agree reporting criteria. Disseminate.

Who is the ME reporting guidance for?

Possible users of the eMERGE ME reporting guidance e.g.

Researchers

Guideline developers

Patient & Lay Groups

eMERGE Users e.g.

PhD students & supervisors

Health technology assessors

Journal editors & reviewers

eMERGe reporting guidance consists of three Parts:

- **Part 1:   Guidance Table containing summary of reporting criteria**

- **Part 2:   Explanatory notes**

- **Part 3:   Extensions to the reporting criteria.**

Part 1: Guidance Table:

- 1 page summary of reporting criteria only

- 19 reporting criteria – common to all ME

- Criteria structured to:
  - Reflect the 7 ME phases
  - Link to journal paper section headings

No.	Criteria Heading	Reporting Criteria
Phase 1 – Selecting meta-ethnography and getting started		
Introduction		
1	Rationale and context for the meta-ethnography	Describe the research or knowledge gap to be filled by the meta-ethnography, and the wider context of the meta-ethnography.
2	Aim(s) of the meta-ethnography	Describe the meta-ethnography aim(s).

Phase 5 – Translating studies into one another		
Methods		
13	Process of translating studies	Describe the methods of translation: - Describe steps taken to preserve the context and meaning of the relationships between concepts within and across studies. - Describe how the reciprocal and refutational translations were conducted. - Describe how potential alternative interpretations or explanations were considered in the translation.
Findings		
14	Outcome of translation	Describe the interpretive findings of the translation.

Part 2: Explanatory notes (EN) provide details of how to apply the criteria.

Phase 5, criterion 13: EN suggest e.g.
- **What type of narrative could be provided to indicate how context were preserved.**
- **What visual aids could indicate how relationships between concepts were preserved.**
- **Possible ways to report refutational translations.**

Phase 7 – Expressing the synthesis		
Discussion		
18	Strengths, limitations & reflexivity	Reflect on and describe the full context and limitations of the synthesis: - Internal context e.g. describe how the nature of the included studies, and how the meta-ethnography was conducted influenced the synthesis findings. - External context e.g. compare the output of the synthesis in the context of existing literature.
19	Recommend-ations and conclusions	Describe the implications of the synthesis.

Part 3: Extensions to the reporting criteria:

1. Format of the ME output (report)

2. Assessment of the methodological strengths and limitations of included studies

3. Using GRADE-CERQual to assess confidence in findings from qualitative evidence syntheses.

Supporting materials

Journal papers:

France *et al.* Improving reporting of Meta-Ethnography: The eMERGe Reporting Guidance (in development). Expected publication later 2017.

Related publications to follow reporting different eMERGE stages.

Training materials:
- 4 short films by George Noblit, Emma France, Jane Noyes & Nicola Ring – due summer 2017
- Webinar recording

Available at: **www.emergeproject.org**

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The eMERGe team!

References:

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France E, Ring N, Noyes J, Maxwell M, Jepson R, Duncan E, Turley R, Jones D, Uny I. Protocol-developing meta-ethnography reporting guidelines (eMERGe). *BMC Medical Research Methodology* (2015) 15:103 DOI 10.1186/s12874-015-0068-0.

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