

just a little hope. Amid inconceivable loss he was surrounded by people living productive lives with courage and hope, himself included.

It is not until the last few chapters that the author's ill-health takes over; with his 'external life becoming smaller' and with time to dwell, he is forced to face up to his mortality. He also starts to explore his childhood experience of sexual abuse at the hands of two men, both, he says, 'imbued with the Church's unassailable authority'. However, once again he gains strength from adversity. It is this period of self-examination and reconciliation with the abuse that he suffered as a child that Strub believes enables his full recovery that follows. In his aptly titled chapter, 'Lazarus', he describes the spectacular impact of protease inhibitors on his and many others' health. Excitedly, but tentatively, he starts to think of the next season, the next Christmas, his next birthday. His recovery is far from plain sailing. Side effects were, at times, disabling in themselves, and adjusting to the concept of having a future and needing to meet the new obligations required for a 'normal life' took him time and considerable effort.

This is a powerful and moving book which I would recommend to anybody, as a story of resilience and survival and not just relevant to those working in the field or those living with HIV. Sean Strub holds no punches and critically evaluates history with genuine insider knowledge. However, what really comes across is the courage and determination of those activists who have since died but whose legacy lives on. Strub, for one, was and continues to be highly influential in his forward thinking, hope-based campaigning and monumental fund-raising efforts. He ends with a stark reminder that there is still work to be done. Combating stigma remains a fundamental obstacle to ending the epidemic.

Sean Strub (Author)

*Body Counts – A Memoir of Activism, Sex, and Survival*, 2014 is available from Scribner, priced £10.99 (paperback)  
ISBN 978-1451661965

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## How to conduct a literature review: a process that should be familiar to nurses

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### Abstract

**Background:** Having worked in paediatric HIV services as a Clinical Nurse Specialist, and in research over the last decade, changes in practice, based on evidence and ongoing findings, have been a common occurrence. More recently, an academic role has highlighted to me the challenges that nurses may be faced with when conducting a literature review. This short paper will describe the importance of reviewing the literature as part of the role of the nurse, and provide some guidance in conducting a literature review.

**Abstract:** Writing and research can be challenging for nurses at undergraduate and postgraduate level; however, understanding the process and developing the skills to conduct a literature review with a staged strategy will positively affect care delivery. Nurses have a responsibility to deliver care based on the best evidence available [1]. Therefore, developing the necessary skills to conduct a literature review is beneficial to both nurses and those in their care.

### The literature review process

Literature reviews are performed by nurse researchers and non-researchers for a number of purposes, including knowledge development, evaluation and practice development that may inform a research study or clinical practice [2]. Conducting and producing a literature review is a staged process that one undertakes, starting with a question or area of interest, identifying appropriate literature in the arena, reviewing that literature and reporting the findings and themes, and evaluating the review. This process is the starting

block of nursing research but should also be utilised to underpin and inform evidence-based nursing practice; being able to develop discussion and argument on a topic is described as central to evidence-based care delivery [3]. There is a constant need to search for new literature and findings to maintain the evidence base and knowledge, ensuring the most up-to-date, effective care is delivered and decisions can be rationalised. Rodgers suggests that higher education supports nurses to search for, identify and critically discuss literature that can then inform practice [4]; whether this is routine practice for nurses remains questionable. It is essential

to utilise a library, and useful to access the support and expertise of a librarian, whilst conducting a literature review.

It is likely that nurses will develop their own area of interest, or that practice or personal experience will produce questions that lead to a focus for a literature review. It must be noted that literature searching and reviewing findings can change or refine the research question [3].

The purpose of a literature review is to collect the relevant evidence to answer a clear, concise question [5]. Once a question has been decided, database searching can begin. Key words are identified from the topic area and entered in to the search bar of the database. Key words should be joined with 'Boolean terms' such as OR, AND, NOT to improve the relevance of the search results [6]. An initial search example may be 'Children AND HIV AND Disclosure OR Naming'. Key words are adapted as the search progresses to ensure all relevant literature is identified. Remember that spellings (e.g. American spellings) will change results and it may be necessary to interchange. There are numerous databases available; nurses often utilise Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) and MEDLINE/PubMed [3,5]; however, there are many more. The Cochrane Library should also be searched for systematic literature reviews. Filters on databases will also assist with relevance; consider changing the time frame of publication to ensure up-to-date literature is found, and check the language of publications to ensure it is understood by the reader. In addition to journal articles it is important to consider books, publications, official reports and papers that may also inform practice decisions. It is important to present the numerical search findings, including the number of articles identified, the number removed after review, and the number relevant to the search that will be critically discussed [7].

Reviewing findings must be strategically managed, and it is often suggested that the use of a table or index cards is the most appropriate way to process and prioritise articles found [3,7]. A table may be simply divided into columns that include: author, year of publication, journal, title, type of study, sample number, and key themes or findings. Always consider quality, validity and reliability of studies; some studies may identify their own limitations in the report [8]. Colour coding, by using highlighters or colours to easily identify themes seen in literature, is suggested [5] and is a personal preference to separate emerging themes that may become clear as the articles are reviewed. It is likely that some articles will have little relevance and will be removed from the review. Although

literature sorting is a time-consuming exercise, this is a crucial stage of the review and will inform ongoing research or practice development.

Nurses should develop skills to critique research, reports and articles that are important when reviewing the search findings [2]. The review should report an objective, critical analysis of the findings [5,6] and should include a summary of the themes and key areas; there may be a consensus of opinion or a number of different views to present [8]. It is important to identify what is known and what is not yet known with relevance to your question or subject [7].

At times the literature review may answer your question; however, it may be that the literature review is a starting point to a research project, and in this case the findings should define a research question and hypothesis [5].

## Conclusion

Understanding the process of conducting a literature review is an important skill for nurses so that existing knowledge can be understood and considered. Nurses today should be research active and ensure evidence-based, high-quality care is a priority in an ever-changing arena. Developing the skills to critically analyse and discuss literature supports clinical confidence and personal and professional development.

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