

Editorial

The Value of Reviews

A review is a body of text which reviews the critical aspects of published knowledge on a particular topic area. It specifically aims to provide up-to-date information on the literature related to the topic area and often provides justification for future research in the area.

This edition of the AOJ contains a number of review papers. Although these reviews do not report new research findings, their benefit is their adherence to the purpose of reviews; that is, the provision of a compilation and analysis of results from past literature which allows the comparison of outcomes, proposals, theories to generate a consensus opinion and highlight controversies plus evidence gaps hence leading to the recommendation for further targeted research.

The review topics in this edition vary considerably in topic which reflects the extended knowledge base of Orthoptists today. The review by Moore and Malesic (Glaucoma and sleep apnoea, is there a link?) considers a causative role: whether sleep apnoea can be considered a risk factor for glaucoma. Whilst, Le, Georgievski and Koklanis (Surgical considerations in the treatment of intermittent exotropia) provide a review that considers a management role: the importance of timing, type and amount of surgery for intermittent exotropia.

Despite the differing topic areas, these reviews show striking similarities in outcome. They prove the difficulty of reaching a definitive conclusion where there are insufficient

studies available of appropriate quality and parity. They identify the lack of information on certain aspects of the topic in question thereby highlight knowledge gaps that can target future research prioritisation. They demonstrate the higher frequency of retrospective studies and the need to move towards prospective research with appropriate and justified outcome measures. And, in undertaking prospective research, these reviews demonstrate the importance of strict inclusion/exclusion criteria in promoting validity of studies, the importance of robust methodology and representative population sampling and the importance of establishing normative data distinct from a population with ocular pathology. The relevance of promoting good quality prospective research is particularly important for those conditions that are known to be increasing in prevalence in certain populations, for example, the ageing population.

It is important for any medical journal that a mix of article types is provided for the reader to offer a breadth of information encompassing new and past knowledge. Reviews are one such important article type and the AOJ succeeds in providing a thorough mix of research information for its readership.

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