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NIOSH EXPERIENCE WITH PLANNING AND DEVELOPING SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

John Piacentino

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH),
Washington DC, United States of America

Thais Morata

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH),
Cincinnati, OH, United States of America

Introduction: The U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has the mandate to assure “every man and woman in the Nation safe and healthful working conditions and to preserve our human resources”. NIOSH’s mission is to develop new knowledge in the field of occupational safety and health and to transfer that knowledge into practice. As a research agency focused on the study of worker safety and health, NIOSH uses a variety of methods to generate and synthesize information, including systematic reviews. Systematic review uses transparent and explicit methods for critically appraising a body of literature to answer key questions.

Materials and Methods: We will review NIOSH experience in developing and contributing to systemic reviews to highlight several key questions, challenges and opportunities for adapting their principles to occupational safety and health topics.

Results: Key questions in occupational safety and health include identifying hazards, characterizing risk, understanding dose-response relationships, determining intervention effectiveness and managing risk. Challenges include heterogenous sources of data, limited research designs and a variety of decision contexts.

Conclusions: Systematic reviews inform the process of producing NIOSH recommendations and offer relevant and valuable tools for critically appraising literature, answering key questions and addressing unique challenges that arise when applying their methods to occupational safety and health topics.
