Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
for tomorrow

DRUG UTILIZATION RESEARCH UNIT
NAVORSINGSEENHEID VIR GENEESMIDDELGEBRUIK
DURU

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH:
Drug Utilisation Research

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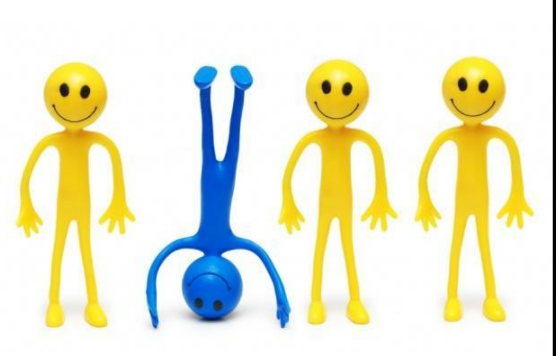


WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- **Exploring/overview of quantitative and qualitative methodologies applied in drug utilisation research (DUR)**
- **Discussing qualitative research methods:**
  - Overview of qualitative methods
  - Developing questions for focus groups
  - Mock focus group

DRUG UTILISATION STUDIES

Distribution, marketing, prescription, use and dispensing of medicines in a society - specific emphasis placed on social, medical and economic consequences

DRUG UTILISATION METHODOLOGIES

2 Main methodologies:

- Quantitative **(mostly used and widely accepted)**
  - Majority of DUR studies fall into this methodology
  - Types of studies, for example:
    - ❑ To quantify the current state of drug usage
    - ❑ Drug use cost
    - ❑ Drug use trends
    - ❑ Time course of drug usage at various levels

Definition of qualitative research

- **Can be defined by 4 characteristics:**
  - ❑ **Purpose:** Understanding the meaning of individuals' experiences
  - ❑ **Primary instrument:** Data collected and analysed by the researcher himself/herself
  - ❑ **Inductive process:** Researchers use qualitative studies to gather evidence to develop theories & hypotheses
  - ❑ **Product:** Descriptive data (words or pictures); not numbers

What is qualitative research?

- It is an inquiry process in which the researcher:
  - Explores one key concept
  - Asks his/her participants general, broad questions
  - Obtains participants' views in words/images
  - Conducts analysis and codes data for themes
  - Themes used to describe participants' views
  - Interprets meaning by focusing on personal reflection & past research

Qualitative versus quantitative

Qualitative	Quantitative
Multiple realities	Single reality
Reality is social & contextual	Reality is objective & context-free
Holistic	Reductionistic
Inductive reasoning	Deductive & inductive reasoning
Discovery of meaning → basis of knowledge	Basis of knowledge → cause & effect relationships
Develops theory	Tests theory

Qualitative versus quantitative (continued)

Qualitative	Quantitative
Meaning of concepts	Measurement of variables
Process orientated	Outcome orientated
Basic element of analysis = words	Basic element of analysis = numbers
Unique	Generalisation
Trustworthiness of findings	Control of error

Commonly used traditions/types of qualitative research

Basic qualitative research	• To understand individuals' meanings of their experiences • Collect data by document analysis/ observations/interviews /focus groups
Ethnography	• Study of culture & society • Researcher forms part of culture/society
Phenomenology	• Studying conscious experiences of people in their "life-world"
Grounded Theory	• Builds theories based on changes occurring over time with a certain phenomena

When should qualitative research be used?

- Exploring peoples' experiences or views of something

For example:

- ❑ Peoples' experiences towards taking certain drug therapies
- ❑ Consumers' perceptions of pharmaceutical advertisements

- Exploring **"new areas"** where its issues are not understood or identified

For example:

- ❑ Studies where questionnaire surveys are required

- Assessing if a new service can be implemented

For example:

- ❑ Discussing the value of a drug abuse awareness campaign at university

PUSHBACK
AGAINST DRUG ABUSE

- Focusing on the context of something
- Sensitive topics in which flexibility will reduce distress
- Questions that cannot be answered by measuring or counting something

Most common methods in basic qualitative research

- **Focus groups**

- **Interviews**
  - ❑ Similar procedure as in focus groups
  - ❑ Types: Informal, open-ended, guide approach, closed-fixed response, telephonic

In-depth interviews

Focus groups

- The term "focus group" was coined in 1956 (Lewis, 1995)
- Seen as an activity where an interviewer or facilitator asks participants specific questions about a topic
- Qualitative data collection procedure which consists of a planned group discussion of a main topic of interest
- Aim is to obtain diverse ideas & perceptions of the topic; aim is not to achieve consensus
- Conducted in a relaxed environment to foster participation

Advantages and disadvantages of focus groups

Advantages

- Generates rich information quickly
- Information comes directly from people who have insight
- Provides diverse opinions & ideas
- Relatively low cost & efficient

Disadvantages

- Susceptible to facilitator bias
- Few vocal individuals can dominate discussion
- Limited generalisability to larger populations

Activities necessary to conduct focus groups

Three phases:

- **Phase 1:** Conceptualisation
- **Phase 2:** Group discussion
- **Phase 3:** Analysing and reporting

Phase 1: Conceptualisation

- Purpose
- Whom to study
- Planning

Purpose & whom to study

- What do you want to achieve with the focus group? Type of information?
- From whom can you get this information?
- Ties in with the aim and objectives of the study

Planning

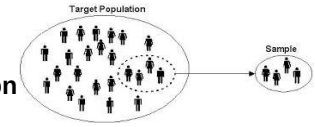
Physical administrative activities to plan before the focus group can be conducted:

- ❑ **Venue** to conduct focus group
- ❑ **Transport** of participants
- ❑ **Invitation:** Preamble & consent form
- ❑ Will food be served?
- ❑ Obtaining a **facilitator** to lead the focus group
- ❑ **Budget**
- ❑ 2 **voice recorders**

Phase 2: Group discussion

- Participant selection
- Development of questions
- Skills required by facilitator

Participant selection



- What type of people do you want to invite to participate?
- **Sampling:** *Random* vs *convenience* vs *purposive* vs *stratified*, etc.
- **Sample size:** Usually 6 – 12 participants

Development of questions

- Need to develop a **focus group protocol**
- **Protocol**:
  - ❑ Detailed plans written down to ensure order during focus groups
  - ❑ Consists of steps (introduction & conclusion) tasks, questions and/or prompts
- **Probes and clarifying questions**
  - ❑ Ensures that participants will give more than just one sentence answers
  - ❑ Assists in more detailed information on the topic

Do's & don'ts of asking questions/prompts

- ❑ Keep participants talking
- ❑ Listen and do not finish participants' thoughts
- ❑ See things from the participants' perspectives
- ❑ Participants should be viewed as experts
- ❑ Do not make assumptions, ask simple questions
- ❑ Do not ask leading questions, e.g., "Don't you think…"

GROUP ACTIVITY 1

- Groups will be provided with topics each consisting of specific aims and objectives
- Each group must develop a set of 3 questions relating to this topic

Skills required by facilitator

- Ability to lead a group and be comfortable
- "*Think on their feet*"
- Make participants feel comfortable and at ease; open to talk
- Ability to "*draw information out of people*"
- Advisable to use psychologists / psychology postgraduate students

Phase 3: Analysing and reporting

- Analysis of discussion
- Reporting of data

Analysis of the discussion & recording of data

- Discussion recorded by means of voice recorder (preferably 2)
- Researcher needs to listen to recorded data at least twice within a 24 hour period
- Capture recorded data verbatim (word for word, including sounds made)
- Conduct thematic analysis based on Tesch's technique of descriptive analysis
- Descriptive statements used to discuss the findings - quoting excerpts from the raw data

GROUP ACTIVITY 2

- Decide on a facilitator who will ask the questions
- Each group to swop their topic, aim, objectives and 3 questions developed in Group activity 1 with another group
- Explain the new topic to your group
- Conduct a mock focus group

Rigour in thematic analysis

- General principles to which qualitative research have to adhere to
- "Good practice guidelines"
- Will add credibility, reliability, and validity to the focus group results
- *Green and Thorogood* or *Lincoln and Guba's* criteria

Ethical considerations

- **Confidentiality**: No names of participants may be published; any names in recordings must be written as a 'code reference'
- Inform participants that focus group is **voluntary** and that they can **withdraw at any moment**
- Inform participants beforehand about **voice recorders**
- Invite by means of a **preamble** & **consent form must be signed** by each before focus group (**also verbal**)
- Humans involved – requires **ethical clearance** from a research committee

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN DUR

- **Types of DUR studies:**
  - ❑ Appropriateness of drug utilisation
  - ❑ Prescription data linked with drug indications
- **Uses of qualitative studies in DUR:**
  - ❑ Study the appropriateness of drug usage in terms of its indications, dosage & duration
  - ❑ Assess the clinical efficacy of drugs
  - ❑ Assist in understanding barriers to using evidence based medicine, and its limitations in informing decisions about treatment

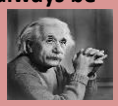
Other advantages of qualitative research

- Effective in mixed method methodologies → qualitative & quantitative methods
- Focus groups → themes identified can be used to develop questions/statements to conduct unique surveys, for example, consumer surveys and health professional surveys

CONCLUSION

- Need to give DUR a "human perspective"
- Qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews should be encouraged in drug utilisation

"Everything that can be counted does not always count; everything that counts cannot always be counted."



Albert Einstein

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