

Intended for healthcare professionals

🗨️Rapid response to:

## Research Methods & Reporting

# Critical reflections on the rise of qualitative research

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## Rapid Response:

### Re: Critical reflections on the rise of qualitative research

To the Editor,

I am writing this letter as a response to "Critical reflections on the rise of qualitative research" by Pope and Mays (2009). My letter touches upon the point discussed about the nature of qualitative inquiry. In the article, the authors discuss how induction is what qualitative research should focus more on, and including deductive aspects in qualitative studies is a bit 'odd' comparatively.

As the authors explain, induction is indeed one of the main aspects in qualitative research. Inductive, exploratory studies which look into new paradigms, bring paradigms to a new territory (Newman and Cooper, 1993), find new variables or conditions (Aguinis et al., 2013) etc. are found to have a higher contribution to as well as impact on scholarly community, when compared to studies that merely refine or extend an existing idea. From this perspective, inductive qualitative studies are considered most appropriate in the early phases of new theory building. However, even an inductive study cannot avoid incorporating elements of deduction in it (Strauss, 1987).

Most qualitative studies, even the exploratory ones, often involve induction and deduction simultaneously (Miles and Huberman, 1984). For instance, selecting participants in a qualitative study often requires theoretical sampling. By definition, this incorporates existing theory or deductive logic into the qualitative study. Likewise, the research design and framework (as the authors state here) of a qualitative study is also informed by existing theory. However, the benefits of having such a framework goes beyond just providing a systematic (and seductive) outline or scaffold. The deductive structure makes sure that the researchers are at least familiar with the involved dimensions (Berry and Jensen, 2001) before a study commences. Studies following this logic thus

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limited to one cycle only, defying the main procedural characteristics of theory building. Fields like biology (Hagstrum 2013), comparative politics (Emigh 1997, Gerring 2007), criminology (Sullivan 2011) etc. have identified this theory building potential of studies involving both induction and deduction. Applying this logic in medical sciences will thus contribute to impactful theory development.

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