



# **JBI ADELAIDE GRADE CENTRE**

**2020 Annual Report**

**[jbi.global/grade](https://jbi.global/grade)**

## MESSAGE FROM THE CENTRE DIRECTOR

The year 2020 was certainly like no other. Throughout the year we were presented with many unexpected challenges and significant uncertainty as we encountered a global pandemic. Despite this, I am immensely proud of how JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre staff adapted to these challenges and pivoted towards innovative solutions, such as delivering workshops online and supporting guideline groups through videoconferencing technology such as Zoom.

In our centre, we pride ourselves on the excellent educational experience we provide attendees at our workshops. We also place significant value on the importance of using these sessions as ways to develop and grow a network of GRADE users in Australia and to foster collaboration, interaction and sharing. When it became clear we had no choice but to transition to online workshops, I was impressed with how the team endeavoured to ensure that any online experience would not be a poor imitation of our workshops, but would improve on the experience. Through the use of breakout rooms, facilitated discussions, carefully considered group work and interactive polls we were able to offer a high quality online educational offering that replicated and expanded upon our in-person offerings. All of these were received well by our participants with evaluations demonstrating a high level of satisfaction.

Although we missed the opportunity to meet with fellow GRADE members in person at the meetings of the GRADE Working Group, JBI Adelaide GRADE members were able to attend the larger GRADE working group meetings throughout the year, with more members able to attend online than previously in-person. The move to online events internationally enabled JBI Adelaide GRADE staff to provide many presentations on guideline development and GRADE, including at JBI webinars, GIN webinars, the GIN conference and for various other initiatives and groups.

Pleasingly we continue to see GRADE being widely adopted and championed across the JBI Collaboration. We have expanded upon GRADE guidance in our Comprehensive Systematic Review Training Program (delivered to 1000+ participants in 2020), and have seen an increased uptake of GRADE Summary of Findings

Tables in JBI Systematic Reviews published in JBI Evidence Synthesis, along with more authors publishing interactive summary of findings tables in our journal.

In 2020 we were in high demand to continue our consultancy and methodological support work with guideline development groups in Australia. Our Centre staff and members also continue to engage with the GRADE Working Group project groups, with all centre staff contributing to one or more of these groups and helping to advance GRADE approaches. Importantly, our study on the use of GRADE in Australian Clinical Practice Guidelines was formally published, which sheds light on how guideline developers in the region currently use GRADE but also identifies a need for further support and training.

Despite the difficult circumstances, I am immensely proud, impressed and astonished at the way our team has come together and continued to strive towards achieving our centre's mission. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our staff, members, students, the GRADE Guidance Group and the GRADE Working Group for their support in this most extraordinary of years.



**Zachary Munn**  
*JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre Director*

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## INTRODUCTION

The JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre, established in November 2016, was the first GRADE centre in Australia and New Zealand and has acted as a central hub of GRADE related research and teaching in the region. In addition, it was the first GRADE Centre to be established within the JBI Collaboration, and as such supports and promotes the use of GRADE amongst this group. The centre offers training in GRADE methods and contributes to the scientific development of GRADE methods, focusing on promoting the use of GRADE for systematic reviews and guideline development. For more information, visit <https://jbi.global/grade>

This report outlines the activities of the Centre during its fourth year of operation in 2020.



## GRADE IN AUSTRALIAN CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES: A METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW

This was a methodological study that investigated if (and how) clinical practice guidelines indexed in the NHMRC clinical practice guidelines portal from inception to August 2018 utilised GRADE methods. Our findings indicated that of 240 eligible guidelines retrieved, only 15 followed GRADE methodology. These 15 guidelines were then assessed based on how closely they adhered to the GRADE methods, and were appraised for quality using the AGREE II (domain 3: rigour of development) tool. This critical examination of guidelines identified a positive linear relationship between the how strongly these guidelines adhered to the GRADE approach, and their overall quality. This may be worrisome seeing as so few recent guidelines actually followed the GRADE approach, which may suggest that a large majority of current Australian clinical practice are not of the highest quality. Finally, we suggest strategies to increase the uptake and reporting of GRADE in order to improve the reliability and readability of future Australian clinical practice guidelines. To read the article in detail, [click here](#).

### Project key findings:

- GRADE use in Australia has been steadily increasing following support by the NHMRC in 2011
- We compared GRADE adherence to the AGREE II scaled domain score. There was evidence of a positive association between GRADE compliance and scaled domain score, representative of guideline quality.
- While GRADE usage in Australia is increasing, strategies for further uptake and application are required and discussed.

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### Guidelines rarely used GRADE and applied methods inconsistently: A methodological study of Australian guidelines

Timothy Hugh Barker · · Mafalda Dias · Cindy Stern · Kylie Porritt · Rick Weichula · Edoardo Aromataris · Sue Brennan · Holger J. Schünemann · Zachary Munn · [Show less](#)

Published: October 29, 2020 · DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinept.2020.10.017> · [Check for updates](#)

Highlights

Abstract

Keywords

References

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Related Articles

### Highlights

- Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation (GRADE) use in Australia is increasing following the advocacy by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for the GRADE approach.
- However, the guidelines that followed GRADE methods were still in the minority of all Australian clinical practice guidelines indexed in the NHMRC clinical guidelines portal.
- This article compares guideline quality with adherence to the GRADE approach and suggests recommendations to improve the use of GRADE methods for future Australian clinical practice guidelines.



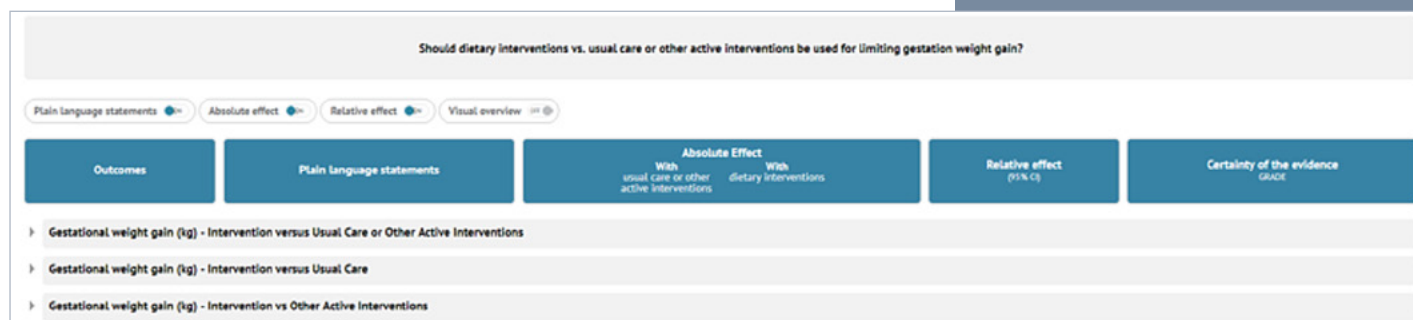
## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TABLES IN JBI EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

GRADE Summary of Findings tables remain a requirement for JBI reviews of effects and are recommended for other types of JBI reviews. As can be seen in Table 1, 75% of quantitative reviews published in the journal in 2020, the majority of which are reviews addressing the effectiveness of an intervention or therapy, have GRADE SoF tables.

Year	2020 SRs published	SoF Grade	%
Total SRs	33	9	27%
Comp	0	0	
Mixed	0	0	
Prevalence	1	0	
Qual	9	0	0%
Quan	12	9	75%
Scoping	11	0	0%
Umbrella	0	0	

**Table 1:** Total Systematic reviews published and percentage of summary of findings tables

Building on the pilot launch of interactive Summary of Findings tables in 2019, the *JBI Evidence Synthesis* editorial team continues to offer opportunity for GRADE Summary of Findings (SoF) tables in an interactive format, iSoF tables, where appropriate. The interactive version of GRADE Summary of Findings presents key information from systematic reviews in several formats that vary in content and graphical layout.

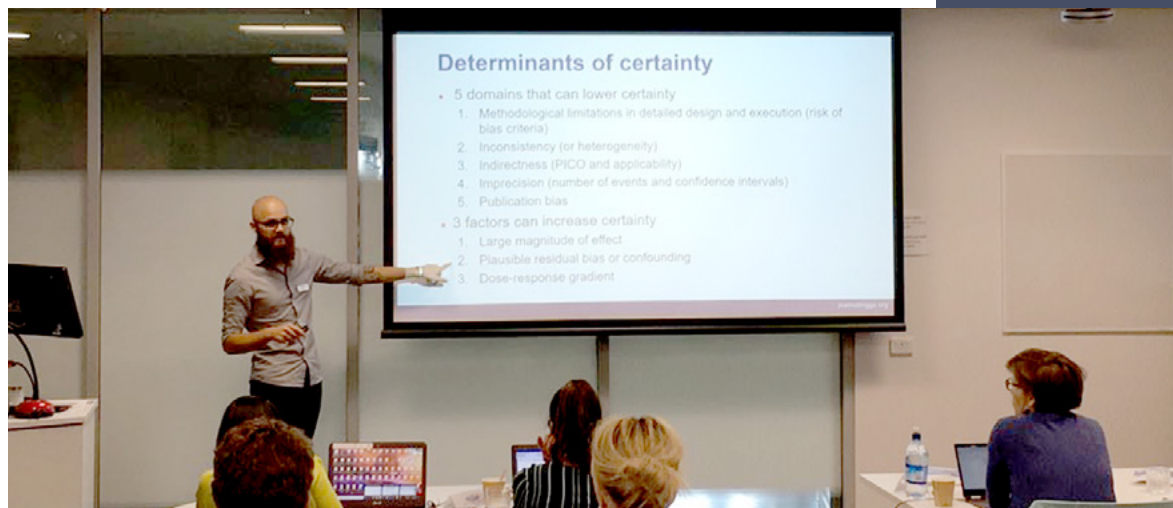


**Figure 1:** The iSoF tables are linked from the standard SoF and contents of a systematic review



## TEACHING REPORT

In Australia, New Zealand and across the JBI Collaboration, JBI Adelaide GRADE Members conduct workshops on GRADE using the JBI Adelaide GRADE teaching materials which have been developed by Centre staff. These teaching and training activities serve as a way to promote the use of GRADE across Australia and New Zealand. These materials are regularly reviewed and updated by centre members.



*Dr Tim Barker presenting a JBI Adelaide GRADE Workshop*

Whilst our GRADE workshop was delayed twice in the first half of the year we were able to successfully run remote training three times from September to December 2020 for 54 participants. A brief summary of our training activities during 2020, including the number of participants registered, is included below.

### Adelaide training highlights

- 3 external 1-day workshops (total of 54 participants)
- 1 Internal workshop for JBI/University of Adelaide Students (24 participants)
- Workshops for University of Melbourne (x2)
- Workshop for Guideline Development group evaluating ECMO
- Workshop for the Heart Foundation
- Workshop for the Society of Obstetric Medicine of Australia and New Zealand

### Systematic Review Training (including GRADE)

In addition to the dedicated GRADE training mentioned above, a GRADE module has been incorporated into the JBI Comprehensive Systematic Review Training Program. In 2020, 45 of our centres hosted courses across the globe (including in Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Denmark, England, Ethiopia, Japan, Kenya, Myanmar, Portugal, China, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, USA) with 1025 participants, all who were introduced to GRADE methods.

### INGUIDE

GRADE Centre Director Zachary Munn also contributed voiceovers for INGUIDE. INGUIDE is a comprehensive, evidence-based, and up-to-date training program for guideline recommendation and development. It is the product of a joint partnership between leaders in the field of guideline development - [Guidelines International Network \(GIN\)](#), a global network of guideline producing organizations and guideline participants, and world-renowned experts in guideline research, development and implementation at [McMaster University's Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact](#).



## METHODOLOGICAL AND SCHOLARLY PROJECT WORK

The JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre are involved in a number of methodological and scholarly projects related to GRADE. This includes methodological development work as part of the GRADE Project groups and also in other projects relating to JBI related implementation and use of GRADE. Members work on projects relating to the development of GRADE methods, evaluation of GRADE, experiences of using GRADE and any other GRADE related scholarly work. Members also generate their own projects for scholarly consideration and these are discussed within the GRADE centre and where appropriate the broader GRADE working group.

JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre staff contribute to or are members of the following GRADE Working Groups: Overviews, CERQual, Training and Credentialing, Prognosis, Stakeholders, Wording of recommendations, Rapid guidelines, Implementation, Technology, Evidence to decisions, GRADE NRS and GRADE Multiple Comparisons.

Our team have increasingly been involved in research and methodological developments over the last 12 months. Areas of particular strength amongst the team include evidence synthesis, guideline development methods, GRADE, EBHC education, evidence implementation and predatory journals.

In line with our focus on EBHC scholarly work and development, an NHMRC investigator Grant was submitted at the beginning of 2020 to advance the science of evidence synthesis. This was approved towards the end of last year, with funding being awarded to A/Prof Zachary Munn of \$645,205.00 over 5 years. We are now preparing to begin this work, including the appointment of a new position in the team. We are also recruiting a PhD to this project <https://scholarships.adelaide.edu.au/Scholarships/postgraduate-research/faculty-of-health-and-medical-sciences/evidence-synthesis>. Encouraged by this success, other staff members within the team have been working on grants to advance the field of EBHC.



To provide an overview of some of the scholarly and research work that has been carried out, please find below a list of recent publications from the team.



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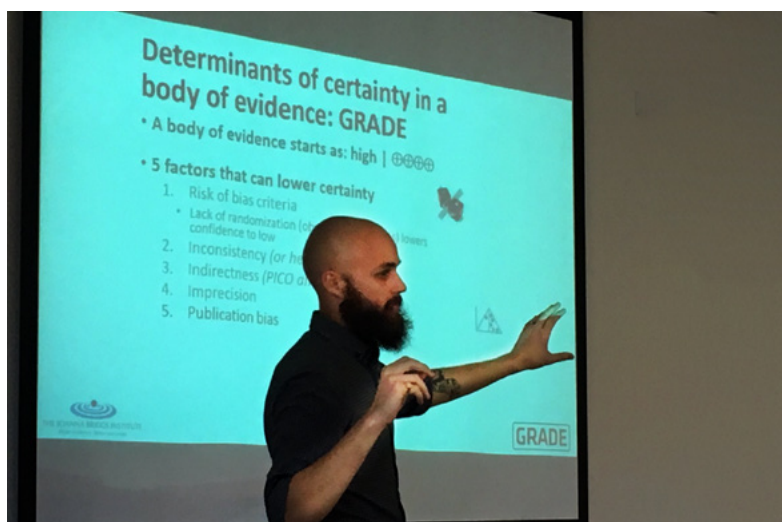
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Dr Tim Barker during a JBI Adelaide GRADE Workshop in Adelaide





## JBİ ADELAİDE GRADE CENTRE MEMBERS

- Associate Professor Zachary Munn, Centre Director
- Associate Professor Edoardo Aromataris, Centre Deputy Director
- Dr Tim Barker, Centre Lead Research Fellow
- Associate Professor Craig Lockwood
- Professor Zoe Jordan
- Dr Cindy Stern
- Dr Kylie Porritt
- Dr Danielle Pollock
- Dr Micah Peters
- Mrs Alexa McArthur
- Dr Judith Gomersall
- Professor Patraporn Tungpunkom
- Professor Miloslav Klugar
- Dr Rasika Jayasekara
- Dr Richard Wiechula
- Dr Sasja Jul Hakonsen
- Dr Nilakshi Waidyatillake
- Dr Wendel Santos
- Adjunct Professor Kim Moretti
- Associate Professor Jitka Klugarova
- Associate Professor Dru Riddle
- Mr Robin Pap
- Dr Emily Reeve
- Associate Professor Motohide Miyahara
- Dr Jennifer Stone
- Dr Clifford Mwita
- Dr Denny John
- Dr Nagendra Dudi-Venkata

## USING GRADE IN GUIDELINES, SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS AND HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENTS

GRADE Centre members are actively using GRADE methods in guidelines and systematic reviews, including as GRADE methodologists. Selected highlights from 2020 include projects for various guideline groups, including Society of Obstetric Medicine of Australia and New Zealand, St Vincent's Hospital, Flinders University and the Royal Australian College of General practitioners, amongst others.

In 2020, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) released new guidelines to assist health professionals in supporting smoking cessation. JBI and the JBI GRADE centre were commissioned to undertake an evidence review on the use of pharmacotherapy to support smoking cessation, that resulted in the summary of findings seen within the report. You can read the report here: [Supporting smoking cessation: A guide for health professionals.](#)



*Assoc Prof Zachary Munn during a GRADE workshop*

## PROMOTION AND SUPPORTING THE USE OF GRADE WITHIN AUSTRALIA AND THE JBC

The JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre aim to promote and support the use of GRADE throughout Australia and New Zealand and the JBI Collaboration. Since our launch, we have received numerous inquiries regarding GRADE work via email, phone and in person. Meetings and teleconferences have been held with various guideline developers and professional societies to introduce them to GRADE and to highlight the benefits of this approach.

We have established a newsletter for our GRADE Centre (in collaboration with the Melbourne GRADE Centre) which is available [here](#). This work has been led by Dr Danielle Pollock, JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre member.



### Twitter

We were able to increase the number of members of the centre over the last year and gained 263 new followers on Twitter. You can view our twitter [@JBI\\_GRADE](#).



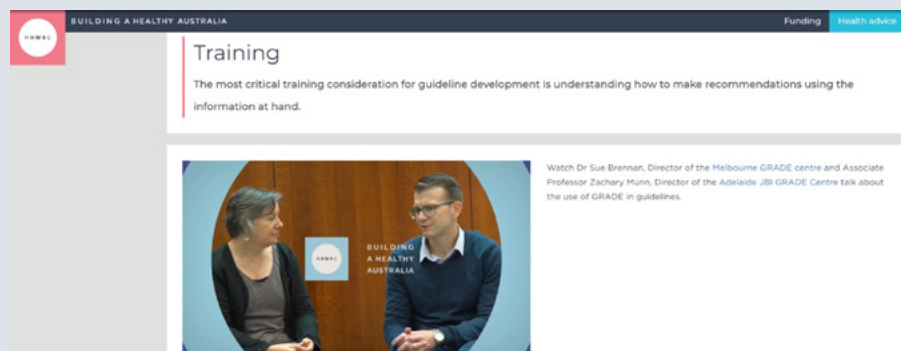
Dr Danielle Pollock



## NHMRC

JBİ Adelaide GRADE Centre Director, Associate Professor Zachary Munn, has also been active in promoting GRADE in his role as a member of the NHMRC Synthesis and Translation of Research Evidence Committee. This year, a new video on the importance of training with GRADE has been made available on the NHMRC Guidelines for Guidelines.

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelinesforguidelines/plan/training>



## Ask JBI: What is the GRADE approach?

We have also filmed a video introducing GRADE to the JBI Collaboration. In this video, Dr Tim Barker and Associate Professor Zachary Munn explain the GRADE approach, and how GRADE can be used for clinical practice guideline developers and systematic review authors.

This is a fantastic video to help introduce GRADE to new evidence synthesizers and guideline developers.

**FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES**  
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**GRADE Australia Newsletter**

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