11.2.3 Introduction

The introduction should be comprehensive and cover all the main elements of the topic under review. Due to scoping reviews being essentially exploratory, it is not expected that the background covers all the extant knowledge in the area under review. The reason for undertaking the scoping review should be clearly stated together with what the scoping review is intended to inform.

The suggested length for the introduction section of the scoping review protocol is approximately 1,000 words. This section should detail any definitions important to the topic of interest. The information in the introduction must also be sufficient to put the inclusion criteria in context, including an indication of whether or not there are existing scoping reviews, systematic reviews, research syntheses, and/or primary research papers available on the topic, hence supporting the rationale to conduct the scoping review. While the inclusion criteria section of the protocol (explained below) should contain clear details of each of the Population, Concept and Context elements, the introduction must provide sufficient detail in terms of the rationale for each element. Explaining for example, why only primary care settings are of interest in terms of the context of the review question above.

The introduction should conclude with a statement that a preliminary search for existing scoping reviews (and ideally systematic reviews too) on the topic has been conducted. The date of the search/es and databases searched or search platforms utilized must be stated, e.g. JBI Database of Systematic Reviews and Implementation Reports, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, CINAHL, PubMed, EP PI, and Epistemonikos, where relevant. If existing reviews or systematic reviews are available on the topic, a justification that specifies how the proposed review will differ from those already conducted should be detailed. This is so that readers can easily establish what new knowledge or insight the proposed review will contain in relation to existing evidence syntheses.

The introduction should conclude with an overarching review objective that captures and aligns with the core elements/mnemonic of the inclusion criteria (e.g. PCC). The objective of the scoping review should indicate what the scoping review project is trying to achieve. The objective may be broad and will guide the scope of the enquiry. For the title example above, the objective has been phrased:

“The objective of the review is to map the available evidence to provide an overview of the use of non-invasive thermometers in the general context of health care.” (Mordififi et al. 2016, p. 106)

Further considerations around the importance of clearly identifying the objective/s and review question/s for scoping reviews has been discussed elsewhere (Peters, 2016). Vancouver style of referencing should be used throughout the protocol with superscript numbers without brackets, used for in-text citations. A guide to the Vancouver style of referencing can be found here.