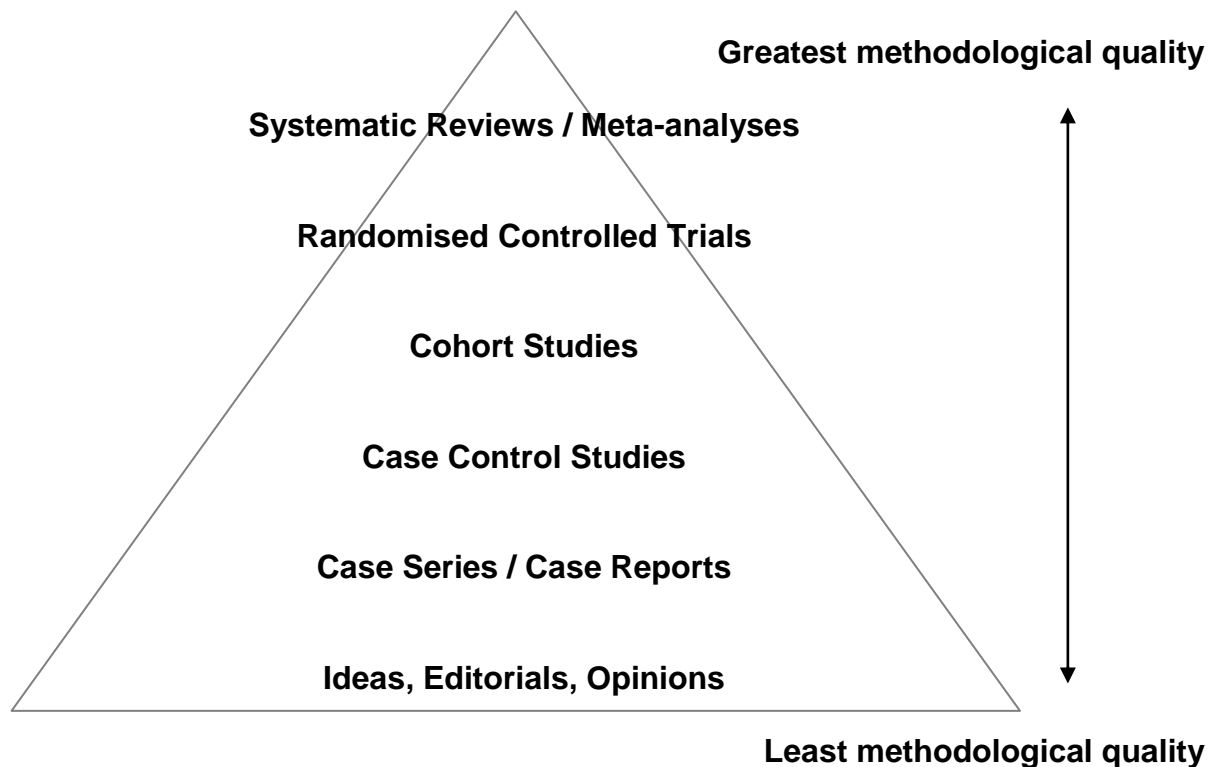


Levels of evidence in healthcare

For clinical questions dealing with therapy, prevention, aetiology or harm, randomised controlled trials (RCTs) can potentially provide the best evidence – the 'gold standard'. For other types of clinical question, different types of studies are of importance:

- Cohort studies for prognosis
- Diagnostic studies and cohort studies for diagnosis

Systematic reviews (often called meta-analyses when in quantitative form) can provide a more balanced view of the evidence than single RCT as they combine the results of a number of RCTs, so good systematic reviews are considered as the top level of evidence.



The evidence pyramid show increasing methodological quality as you move up, but as you move up the pyramid, the amount of available literature decreases.

More detail on each level is available from:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evidence-based_medicine

<http://www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/40002064/>

<http://www.cebm.net/index.aspx?o=1047>