

The Brookbush Institute Publishes a NEW Glossary Term: 'Meta-analysis (MA)'

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Excerpt from Glossary Term: [Meta-analysis \(MA\)](#)

- Additional Glossary Term: [Systematic Review](#)

- Related Certification: [Human Movement Specialist \(HMS\) Certification](#)

META-ANALYSIS

Built upon a systematic review framework



Resolve discrepancies between high-quality RCTs



Typical goal is a single effect estimate or direction



Not inherently a higher level of evidence



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Meta-analysis -
<https://brookbushinstitute.com/glossary/meta-analysis-ma>

DEFINITION

Meta-analysis (MA) employs statistical methods to aggregate effect sizes from multiple studies, intending to estimate the overall effect magnitude, determine the probable effect direction, or assess statistical significance. Meta-analyses are typically built upon a systematic review framework, which defines the criteria for study inclusion and ensures methodological

transparency. (See: How to Perform a Meta-analysis below.) In this sense, meta-analysis is best understood as a statistical tool that may contribute additional insight to a well-conducted systematic review. However, it is not a review in itself.

PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

The primary utility of a meta-analysis lies in resolving differences between high-quality randomized controlled trials (RCTs) (with similar design) that report conflicting findings. When applied correctly, a meta-analysis may enhance statistical power, refine estimates of effect size, or clarify the likely direction of effect. Its value is most evident



Suggesting that meta-analyses provide a higher level of evidence than the original studies in the review, is like suggesting that Rotten Tomatoes reviews are better than the Netflix movies they rate.”

Dr. Brent Brookbush, CEO of Brookbush Institute

when the included studies are sufficiently similar in design and outcome measures, and when a definitive conclusion cannot be drawn from individual trials alone.

WHAT A META-ANALYSIS IS NOT

Meta-analysis is not original research, nor is it a “superior” form of evidence. It is a form of secondary analysis (an average of averages) and should not be interpreted as more valid than the underlying primary studies. Although this form of synthesis can be powerful, considering a meta-analysis superior to the original data it summarizes is analogous to treating a reviewer’s movie rating as more authoritative than the film itself. As noted above, meta-analyses have a distinct purpose and function, but they also introduce new risks: additional layers of bias and error, statistical distortion, and misinterpretation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)...

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