

STARS Education and Research Alliance

CREATING KNOWLEDGE | TRANSFORMING CARE

Using Critically Appraised Topics (CATs) to find the clinical bottom line

The intent of the Critically Appraised Topics (CATs) process is to answer questions identified in clinical practice, generally arising from specific patient interactions. CATs are short summaries of the most up-to-date and relevant evidence typically focused on patient-specific clinical practice issues. These standardised summaries draw together the best available evidence to facilitate integration of clinical research with clinical practice.

Aims

- Support clinical teams in delivery of evidence-based best practices in clinical care
- Summarise best available evidence to support clinical practice
- Provide a supportive forum for practical examination, discussion, and review of evidence around a specific clinical issue
- Provide a compendium of CATs reflecting clinical practice issues across multiple services and settings at the Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS)
- Ensure the expertise of experienced clinical researchers is shared with others involved in delivering direct patient care, thereby contributing to better patient outcomes and interprofessional practice
- Identify evidence gaps in best practice requiring further research

Guiding principles

- CATs may be organised to help guide clinical practice changes
- Potential topics for CAT group formation will be generated at the clinical level, by clinicians
- Invitations to CAT groups will be sent to small numbers of key relevant teams in STARS, UQ and other relevant clinical and research staff, in sufficient time to permit participation.
- The group will be chaired and facilitated by members of the STARS Education and Research Alliance conjoint team, or STARS Clinical Research Committee members
- A UQ Health Librarian will be part of each CAT group
- CATs will be completed within a specified time frame
- CAT groups will ideally be formed prior to implementing practice changes

The outcome of the CAT process will be one of the following:

1. Evidence supports current practice at STARS, no further action required
2. Evidence is sufficient to support a change in clinical practice at STARS, and potentially inform a quality improvement activity
3. Insufficient evidence to answer the clinical question, consider further research to address the issue

Proposal ideas for CATs

CATs questions may come from several sources, for example:

- Staff (e.g., clinical nurses, unit managers, educators, allied health professionals, medical staff) may identify a topic and request a CAT group be formed prior to implementing practice changes in a clinical area
- STARS Education and Research Alliance conjoint team or STARS Clinical Research Committee members may work with clinicians to identify specific patient scenarios in which additional evidence is needed to inform practice.

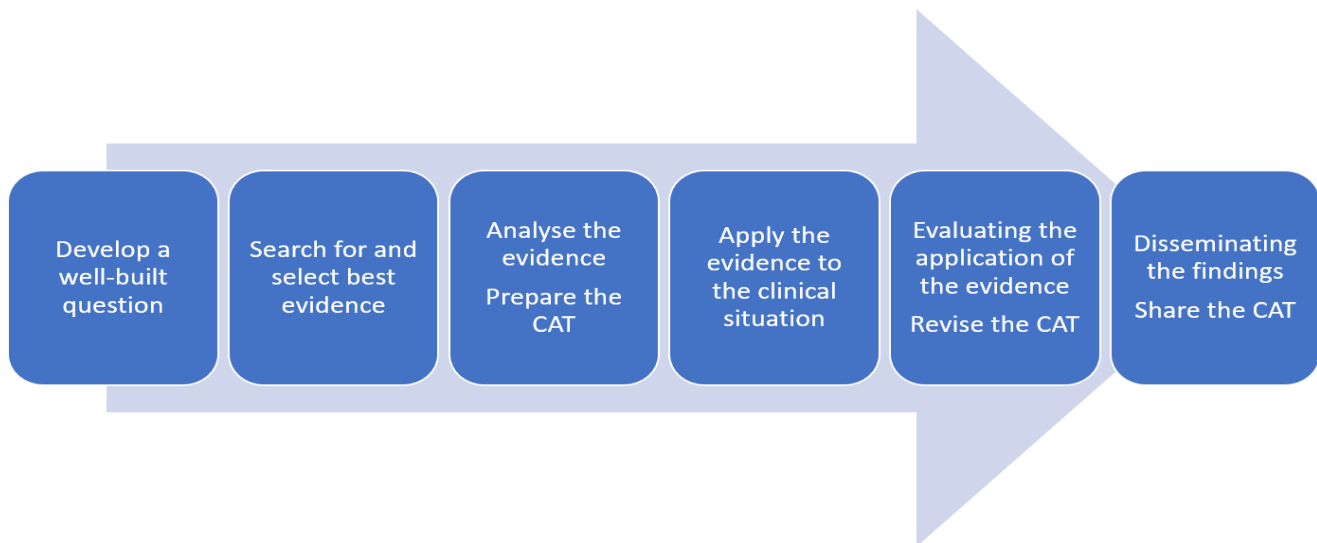
Process

Participation will be offered in face-to-face and virtual meetings to maximise attendance and contributions. Guided by a facilitator and supported by health librarians, you will work as an interprofessional team to refine the research question, develop a search strategy, and critically appraise evidence to answer your clinical question. CAT meetings should include a CAT lead/s, group facilitator, librarian, and clinical team members. It can be challenging for all relevant parties to be included in meetings, so it is recommended that minimum attendance be: CAT group lead/s; research facilitator; librarian; 2 key other clinicians (consider multidisciplinary approach). Consider if the CAT group can be run during or instead of an already established team meeting, and communicate this option with the CAT lead or facilitator.

Typically, each CAT meeting (ideally two, spaced approximately 2 weeks apart) will last 60-120 minutes, aiming for the initial clinical practice issue presentation to last no more than 10 minutes (maximum 10 slides), to allow sufficient time for discussion.

The STARS Education and Research Alliance (SERA) team (email: STARS_EducationandResearch@health.qld.gov.au) is the main point of contact regarding initial organisational aspects of the CATs. A member of the SERA holds the CAT co-coordinator role. This individual will initially touch base with group leads, identify a facilitator, and a librarian to establish initial processes.

The CAT process:



The UQ librarians have developed a short video on creating questions for CATs and developing database search concepts, watch it on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOP4o1hCiok>

Key roles and responsibilities

Group lead/s: this member is typically a clinician or manager at STARS. CAT group leads will be responsible for:

- Question generation
- CAT group attendee invitation: the lead/s will contact the SERA team with a list of names of clinicians/managers who may be interested in attending. Please note who is considered as core attendees (leads and at least 2 key clinicians) as well as optional attendees.

- Optional: preparation of short presentation on CAT topic for the first meeting, to orient members to the background and key concepts to be discussed during CAT
- Leading discussion and note-taking during meetings around question formation, PICO, quality rating, and clinical bottom line
- Collaborating with group facilitator to review abstracts (as found by librarian) and full texts
- Deciding on final full text inclusion
- Disseminating chosen full texts and quality rating tool to broader CAT group team members
- Reviewing and rating full texts
- Writing draft CAT group outcomes and disseminating to all group attendees (alongside facilitator)
- Finalising report and sending through to CAT team members

Group librarian:

- Booking of library space
- Attendance and contribution at meetings
- Run searches based on initial CAT meeting outcome and disseminate to leads and facilitator
- Complete search strategy component of CAT report

Other clinical group attendees: other members typically invited by the group leads include relevant clinicians and managers. Individuals invited typically represent different disciplines to ensure multidisciplinary involvement.

- Attendance at CAT meetings
- Review of chosen full texts in between meetings
- Quality rating of full texts
- Review of draft CAT group outcomes report

SERA team roles and responsibilities:

Group facilitator: this is a member of the SERA conjoint team or research committee member. They will be responsible for:

- Providing information around CAT group processes and documentation to group leads (if already not provided by CAT coordinator)
- Chairing CAT group meetings
- Presenting information around CAT processes during CAT meetings
- Reviewing abstracts and full texts alongside of group leads
- Providing advice regarding quality rating scale choice
- Rating full text articles
- Writing draft CAT group outcomes and disseminating to all group attendees (alongside group lead/s)
- Disseminating CAT to relevant parties e.g., SERA website

SERA admin:

- Organisation of CAT group meeting time
 - o Note: Core people (leads, facilitator, 2 key clinicians) will be included in the invitation, and other group attendees will be added as optional attendance (including CAT coordinator and SERA Alliance Manager).

CAT coordinator: this is a member of the SERA conjoint team. They will likely not attend the meetings or be a part of the individual CAT topics (unless also the group facilitator). They provide overarching support to CAT group processes. They are responsible for:

- Organisation of librarian involvement (along with SERA Alliance manager)
- Coordinating payment of librarians (along with SERA Alliance manager)
- Managing broad CAT processes
- Reporting of CAT group outcomes
- Organisation of brief initial meeting with group leads to ensure handover of CAT processes

The STARS Education and Research Alliance website resources section has the final reports from previous CATs in STARS: <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/stars/education-research-alliance/resources>