



Critically Appraised Topics (CATs) at STARS

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

Aims

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

Guiding principles

- CATs will be completed within a specified time frame
- CATs may be organised to help guide clinical practice changes
- CAT groups will ideally be formed prior to implementing 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 and research committee members
- A librarian will be part of each CAT group

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

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

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 a 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 chair, note-taker, and clinical team members.

Typically, each CAT meeting (ideally two) 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 Manager (email: susan.sullivan@uq.edu.au or STARS_EducationandResearch@health.qld.gov.au) is the main point of contact regarding organisational aspects of the CATs and will assist with provision of information before the initial CAT meeting, the set-up and brief reporting of key discussion points and recommendations.

CAT process

1. Develop a well-built question
2. Search for and select best evidence
3. Analyse the evidence - **Write CAT**
4. Apply the evidence to the clinical situation
5. Evaluating the application of the evidence - **Revise CAT**
6. Disseminating the findings - **Share CAT**

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 Parts of CAT document

1. Purpose
2. Reviewer
3. Date of completion
4. Date for review
5. Well-built questions
6. Search strategies and results
7. Evidence retrieved
8. Appraisal
9. Conclusions

The STARS Education and Research Alliance website resources section has the final reports from the first round of CATs in STARS 2021-2022: <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/stars/education-research-alliance/resources>