

# QUADAS-3: updated tool to evaluate risk of bias and applicability concerns in diagnostic test accuracy studies

Word count: 326 (limit 350)

## Authors

Penny Whiting a, Eve Tomlinson a, Bada Yang b, Clare Davenport c, Mariska Leeflang d, Sue Mallett e, Anne W.S. Rutjes f,g

a Population Health Sciences, Bristol Medical School, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK.

b Julius Center for Health Sciences and Primary Care, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands

c Test and Prediction Group, Department of Applied Health Science, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

d Centre for Medical Imaging, University College London, London, UK

e Amsterdam University Medical Centers, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

f UniCamillus - Saint Camillus International University of Health Science, Rome, Italy

g Dipartimento di Scienze Mediche e Chirurgiche, Materno-Infantili e dell'Adulto, Università di Modena-Reggio Emilia, Modena, Italy

## Background

The QUADAS-2 tool, published in 2011, was designed to evaluate the risk of bias and applicability of diagnostic test accuracy (DTA) studies. The publication reporting QUADAS-2 has been cited over 12,000 times and it is the recommended tool to assess risk of bias and applicability of studies for major HTA organizations. Although feedback on QUADAS-2 has generally been positive, some signaling questions have been identified as problematic and the tool could be improved based on features included in more recently developed tools.

## Objectives

To update QUADAS-2 to develop the new QUADAS-3 tool.

## Methods

We established a core-group of methodological experts to lead the development of the QUADAS-3 tool supported by a wider steering group.

We followed the following steps:

- Summarised modifications made to QUADAS-2 for the Cochrane Handbook
- Web-based survey of reviewers that have used QUADAS-2
- Considered developments from more recent tools in terms of tool structure and implementation
- Undertook a review of methodological studies that had evaluated QUADAS-2

- Undertook a review of 50 Cochrane DTA reviews to highlight challenges with the assessment of applicability

We have produced a draft tool which is currently undergoing piloting. The results of the piloting, which will also include a comparison of the use of signalling questions with signalling statements, will be used to inform the final version of the tool.

## Results

The new tool follows a similar structure to the QUADAS-2 tool but with some major updates. Key changes include:

- An option to define separate synthesis questions rather than just a single review question
- A new section on defining the ideal test accuracy trial for each synthesis question
- Assessment of risk of bias and applicability at the accuracy estimate level rather than the study level
- A change in answers to signaling questions to include options of “probably yes” and “probably no” and to replace “unclear” with “no information”
- Replacement of “Flow and Timing domain” with new “Analysis” domain
- Changes to some signaling questions
- Inclusion of a section for judging overall risk of bias and applicability (across domains)

## Conclusions

QUADAS-3 will be introduced at the conference and the results of piloting discussed.

## Key words

Risk of bias assessment, applicability, diagnostic test accuracy, systematic review