

Epi 240

# Qualitative Approaches in Clinical and Translational Research

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Session 8

Making the Argument: Transforming Codes and Memos into Findings

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# What's up today

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- Schedule presentations
- Writing it up
- Small group work: Dissecting a qualitative paper
- Large group de-brief

# Presentations

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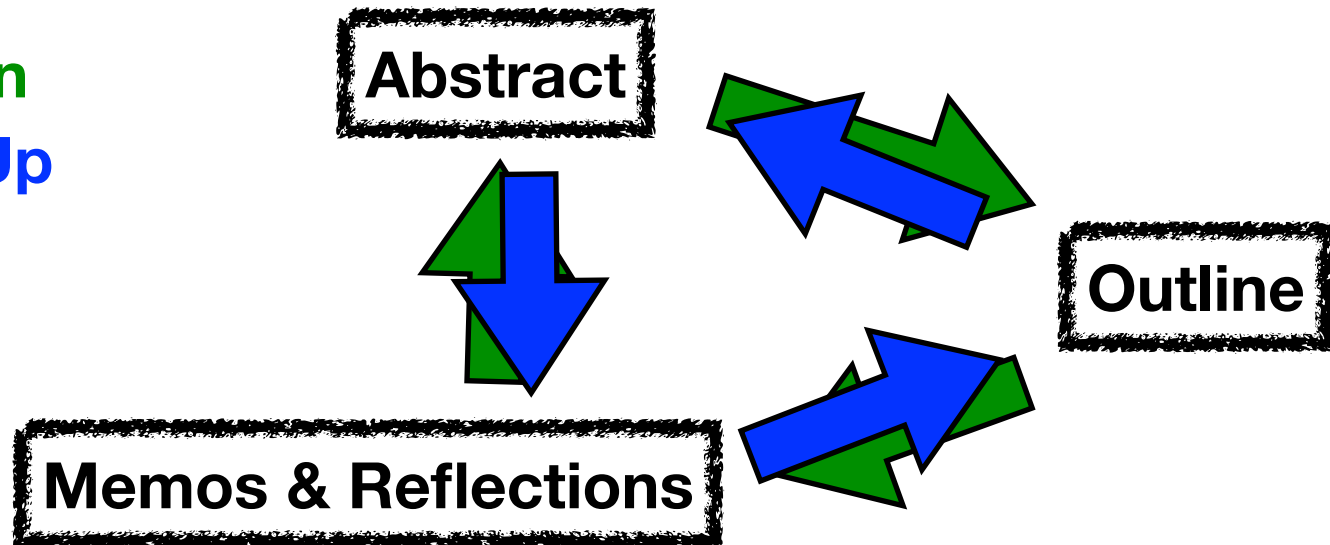
- 8-10 minutes
- Title & topic
- Sites & subjects
- Challenges & insights from free write
- Next steps

# Writing it up

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- How to address writing challenges
  - Overwhelmed by data? Surface findings with **memos and self-reflections**
  - How does it fit together? Structure results by **outlining from codes**
  - Unclear on the contribution? Summarize your **argument in the abstract**
- When to write what

**Top-Down**  
**Bottom-Up**



# Group work

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- 2 papers/groups
  - Language, focus group (JGIM); safety-net ED, iv (HSR)
  - Read abstract, results, and some raw data
  - make 2 sub-groups in each room; **1)** abstract->results; **2)** results->abstract
- Goal: Trace connections between Abstract, Outline, and Results
- Note connections/disconnections between abstract, organization of results, and data presented in results
  - Where are the links apparent? What links are assumed but not made?
- Based on results presented and available raw data, consider the kinds of codes or memos that informed the data analysis
  - Can you imagine the codes that went in to the analysis? What got dropped from the paper that you expect showed up in the analysis?

# Group exercise: Feedback

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- JGIM: Language & translation
  - Findings in paper not found in SG data but also can find links to specific findings in the data.
  - Use of different kinds of qualitative data to support different kinds of arguments.
  - “Funnel-shaped” results: “easy” and concrete findings first, more abstract/theoretical finding that follow. Does this mirror analytic process or is it a rhetorical device? First pass coding focus on concrete/tangible findings and allow more abstract issues to emerge from memos and further coding/reflection.
- HSR: Safety-net emergency department
  - Was this top-down or bottom-up? Consensus = top-down as reflected in the abstract.
  - Heavier reliance on observational data than on the interview data. “Hard-core” coders found lots of stuff in the interview transcript that did not appear in the HSR paper, eg racism, changing economic climate . These themes didn’t come up in paper perhaps b/c paper relied on observation so much. Reading paper provides new ideas of how to code interview, e.g. attending-resident interactions.
  - Pre-specified hypothesis -- does it shape data collection and observation or just analytical process? Shaping the data seems more problematic and seems quite possible. How do you establish your frame before entering the fieldsite and beginning to collect data? When do you decide you have enough data or have done enough analysis of the data?

# Take aways

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- Writing it up is a long process. It starts early and is littered with false starts and red herrings.
- Your strategy for writing it up should be true to the overall project and, in particular, whether you are approaching your question and analysis with a top down or bottom up approach.
- The link between argument and results is particularly important. Use the paper abstract to generate an implicit outline for the results section to follow. You'll refine the argument and abstract as you sift through your results.