**Checklist for Reviewing Public Health Literature**

**The following sections of a paper can be reviewed from many perspectives. Below are the intellectual standards and elements that you can use across sections to help you answer the questions.**

Standards: Clarity, Accuracy, Relevance, Logicalness, Breadth, Precision, Significance, Completeness, Fairness, Depth

Elements: Purpose, Questions, Points of View, Information, Inferences, Concepts, Implications, Assumptions

**Introduction** (~20%)

* What is the underlying problem? What is its relevance?
* What is the underlying theoretical construct (may draw diagram)?
* Where does this study fit in the existing research stream?
  + - How does this study improve upon the design or generalizability of previous studies and/or advance current theory?
* What is the purpose of the paper and are any specific hypotheses expressed?

**Methods** (Variable)

* Describe the study population?
  + - Is it internally valid (participant characteristics are consistent with hypothesis and theoretical construct)
    - Is it generalizable (participant characteristics are representative of a larger, relevant population)?
    - Were the inclusion/exclusion criteria appropriate?
    - Was drop-out or non-response a significant problem?
* Describe the dependent / independent variable?
  + - How is it defined (operationalized)?
    - What type of variable is it (categorical, ordinal, interval)?
    - What are its strengths / weaknesses?
* What is the control condition?
  + - It the control group placebo, usual care, or active?
    - What are the strengths and weakness of control group?
    - Would another control condition have been better?
* Did anything unusual happen during the course of the study that might have impacted the study’s internal validity (e.g., break in blinding, change in control condition, change in recruitment protocol)?
* What is the specific study design?
  + - Experimental/quasi-experimental/non-experimental?
    - Randomized, blinded, cohort, cross-sectional, placebo-controlled, etc.
* What is the statistical analysis? (regression, logistic, descriptive, ANOVA, etc.)
  + - Does is seem appropriate (too simple, too complex, etc.)

**Results** (~30%)

* Is there a demographic table (usually Table 1)? If so, did randomization work? Is the study population consistent with the hypothesis?
* Are there any errors in the key tables? (missing data, numbers that do not add up, etc.)
* Are the results presented consistent with the *a priori* analytic plan? If not, was the deviation appropriated? Did it bias the study?
* In lay language, what do the study results say/mean?
* Are secondary analysis appropriate or are they misleading?

**Discussion** (variable)

* Have the authors placed the results in the context of what is known in the field?
* How are results related to other measures in the field? How variable? Do the authors discuss any potential reasons to account for the variability?
* How do the results add to the total body of knowledge in the field? (Expand? Confirm? Contest?)
* Do the authors suggest the next steps that need to be taken to advance the field further?
* Do the authors suggest any approaches that may remediate any negative outcomes identified? Do they make any public health recommendations? Are they overstepping the data they present?
* Have the authors addressed limitations to their research?

**Conclusion** (~10%)

* What is your take away message from the results? Is it consistent with authors’ conclusions? If not, why not?
* Are they misrepresenting anything anywhere in the paper?

**Abstract** (Very Important)

* Is the abstract a good, accurate summary of the paper