





DR. JEKYLL
and MR. HYDE





ARE YOU COMING TO BED?

I CAN'T. THIS
IS IMPORTANT.

WHAT?

SOMEONE IS WRONG
ON THE INTERNET.



1. Ben Zaranko, *Institute for Fiscal Studies*
2. Charles Tallack, *Health Foundation*
3. Danielle Jefferies, *The King's Fund*
4. Jake Abbas, *NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board*
5. Jess Butler, *NHS Grampian & University of Aberdeen*
6. Kate Cheema, *UCLPartners*
7. Marc Farr, *Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board & East Kent Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*
8. Richard Wood, *NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board & University of Bath*
9. Richard Wilson, *Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board*
10. Rony Arafin, *British Heart Foundation*
11. Sally Gainsbury, *Nuffield Trust*

Imagine you've just been sent some analytical work....

1: What signs are you looking for to give an early indication of quality? What are your 'rules of thumb'?

2: Could any of your 'rules of thumb' be used by someone without technical, analytical training?

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Findings...

Source: *where has this work come from?*

Transparency: *is the analytical approach clear and explicit?*

Expression: *is the analysis laid out with care?*

Findings: *how plausible and useful are the results?*

Source: *where has this work come from?*

Who has produced the work? Are they credible? What are their incentives?

Has the work come from a peer-reviewed journal?

Has the work been 'assured' by a trusted analytical colleague?

Transparency: *is the analytical approach clear and explicit?*

Is the method well described? Has data quality been assessed? Can sources substantiate claims?

Have concepts been defined? Does the data support the concepts?

Are any assumptions explicit and clear? Are they plausible?

Has the underlying analysis been shared? Can it be checked / replicated?

Expression: *is the analysis laid out with care?*

Has care been taken in the overall presentation?

Are statistical terms used with care?

Has a suitable time period been used? Are data sufficiently current?

Is uncertainty recognised?

Findings: *how plausible and useful are the results?*

Are results surprising?

Do findings suggest awareness of the context in which they might apply?

Do findings come with a sense of humility and limitation?

Do findings go with the grain of prior beliefs? How do findings sit with expert intuition?

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The 'rules of thumb' for non-analysts

As a decision maker being supplied with analytical work, ask yourself:

1: What are my starting beliefs?

- Healthy scepticism is a useful default attitude. And so, before reading the work: how do you feel about the subject of the analysis? Do you want certain things to be true? Be careful if you might be reading to have these prior beliefs confirmed.

2: Where does this work come from?

- Has this come to you via a trusted analytical colleague? Do they think it's good?
- Is the purpose of the analysis stated?
- Is it clear who has funded it? What are their likely interests in doing so?
- Is it clear who has done the work? Are they credible? Do they have a track record in this area? What are their likely incentives?

3: Is the analysis transparent?

- Has the underlying analysis or code been shared? Could it be checked independently?
- Are methods and data sources described in detail? (Do statements of method seem to be hiding anything behind 'innovative' techniques?)
- Can sources be traced and checked? Do sources relate to the context (e.g. not taken from radically different health systems)?
- Are any assumptions clear and plausible? Do they connect with real world experience (i.e. not 'if everyone performed as well as the top 20%')?
- Are limitations described? Is there explicit recognition of uncertainty?

4: Do the results make sense?

- Are findings surprising to you? (If so, be sceptical. Especially for claims about 'intervention x causing outcomes y and z').
- Do findings fit with your knowledge of the context (e.g. normal patterns of change)? Are findings situated within what is already known about the topic?
- Overall, do you feel as though the analysis is seeking to inform or persuade you? How could the findings inform your decision making?

Having done this - especially where the analysis is informing a decision - you might want to ask for more detailed review by an analyst.

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‘Rules of thumb’ when assessing the quality of analysis for decision making

14 May 2025

 About 4 mins to read

 [Therese Lloyd](#) | Fraser Battye



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Are there any non-technical 'rules of thumb' for assessing the quality of analysis?

BETTER USE OF ANALYSIS AND DECISION MAKING



**RULE OF
THUMB**

<https://www.strategyunitwm.nhs.uk/publications/are-there-any-non-technical-rules-thumb-assessing-quality-analysis>

SMALL STEPS
ARE STILL
PROGRESS

Where
next?