

# Users' Guides to the Medical Literature: A Manual for Evidence-Based Clinical Practice, 3rd ed >Harm (Observational Studies)

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BOX 14-1

## Users' Guides for an Article About Harm

### •How serious is the risk of bias?

- In a cohort study, aside from the exposure of interest, did the exposed and control groups start and finish with the same risk for the outcome?
- Were patients similar for prognostic factors that are known to be associated with the outcome (or did statistical adjustment address the imbalance)?
- Were the circumstances and methods for detecting the outcome similar?
- Was the follow-up sufficiently complete?
- In a case-control study, did the cases and control group have the same risk for being exposed in the past?
- Were cases and controls similar with respect to the indication or circumstances that would lead to exposure (or did statistical adjustment address the imbalance)?
- Were the circumstances and methods for determining exposure similar for cases and controls?

### •What are the results?

- How strong is the association between exposure and outcome?
- How precise was the estimate of the risk?

### •How can I apply the results to patient care?

- Were the study patients similar to the patient in my practice?
- Was follow-up sufficiently long?
- Is the exposure similar to what might occur in my patient?
- What is the magnitude of the risk?
- Are there any benefits that are known to be associated with exposure?

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