Improving the quality of research papers and journals: where can reporting guidelines help

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CRICS Scientific Editors Meeting
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Experience:
Laboratory research, systematic reviews, research reporting and reporting guidelines
Writing, reviewing, training

Not editor but working closely with editors for 7 years

My talk today:
• EQUATOR Network
• What are the main problems with published research literature
• What help is here for authors, editors and peer reviewers to improve reporting of research studies
• Examples from journals: policies on research reporting, I to A, evaluations, editorials
• Focus on health research but relevant to other areas as well
Freiburg 2012 Symposium

• Outstanding speakers
  – Scientists, clinicians, editors

• Main messages of the meeting:
  – Despite huge effort invested into research publication process by all parties there are still widespread deficiencies in published papers
  – This seriously undermines the value and usability of health research literature
Freiburg 2012 Symposium

Main messages of the meeting (cont):

- Different problems
- Different reasons why these problems arise
- Need different strategies, initiatives, and activities to improve this situation
- Very positive atmosphere
- Lot of enthusiasm
- Many initiatives and ideas presented
- All we need now is to
Why a whole symposium on research reporting?

Serious deficiencies identified in research literature:

- **Non-reporting (or delayed reporting) of whole studies**
  - Often studies with ‘disappointing’ results

- **Incomplete reporting**
  - Omission of crucial aspects of research methods (study participants, interventions, randomisation in trials, etc.)
  - Incomplete results: data cannot be included in meta-analysis
  - Inadequate reporting of harms

- **Selective reporting**
  - Patient outcomes
  - Analyses, e.g. subgroups, alternative analyses

- **Misleading reporting**
  - Misinterpretation of study findings “spin” (e.g. presenting study in more positive way; discrepancies between abstract and whole text, etc.)
  - Misrepresentation of study design (e.g. study claiming is an RCT when is not)

- **Unacknowledged discrepancies between sources**
  - e.g. publication conflicts with study protocol or information in the register
Research article – ‘fit for purpose’

• A published research article is a permanent digital record that will be used by users for many different purposes

• Some readers might be satisfied with scanning an article, or a brief summary

• Others will scrutinise the study in detail for possible inclusion in a systematic review or to influence a clinical practice guideline
  – Only an adequately reported research study can be fully appraised and used appropriately

• Published research articles should be fit for multiple purposes
  – New ways of publishing (e.g., with online supplements with methodological information) can help to meet these varying needs

(Simera & Altman, EBM 2009;14:132-134)
Research article

• Research article is ‘end product’ of one process ...

Primary research
Design ➔ Conduct ➔ Publication

• ...and ‘raw material’ of other processes

Use in further research
Publication ➔ Systematic review ➔ Clinical practice guideline
Informs health policies and clinical practice

Informs health policies and clinical practice

Design ➔ Conduct ➔ Publication

Primary research

Informs health policies and clinical practice

Use in further research
Publication ➔ Systematic review ➔ Clinical practice guideline

Informs health policies and clinical practice

Design ➔ Conduct ➔ Publication

Primary research
Research article

Primary research

Design → Conduct → Publication

Editors – gatekeepers

To ensure articles present sufficient data to allow further use of research

Publication

Use in further research

Systematic review

Clinical practice guideline

Informs health policies and clinical practice
Journals’ “Instructions to Authors”

- Editors can influence authors through their I to A

- I to A vary considerably among journals

- “Instructions [to authors] provide little guidance about methodological and statistical issues, and the advice provided is often contradictory among journals” [Schriger et al 2006]

- It is much better for journals to support consensus guidelines developed by groups of experts
  - consistent advice on reporting across journals
Journals’ “Instructions to Authors”

I to A are long (62 p.) but clearly laid out and written, easy to save and print.

Very specific details requirements and guidance on reporting scientific content of submitted research studies.

Prospective randomized clinical trials should be presented in accordance with the CONSORT statement (http://www.consort-statement.org). The CONSORT statement includes general principles applicable to different types of clinical trials.

Prospective and retrospective observational trials should be presented in accordance with the STROBE statement (http://www.strobe-statement.org). Authors should review the appropriate STROBE checklist when preparing their submission.

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses should be presented in accordance with the PRISMA statement (http://www.prisma-statement.org). Authors should review the appropriate PRISMA checklist when preparing their submission.

I to A are long (62 p.) but clearly laid out and written, easy to find (two references to instructions provided – one goes to very generic publishers’ help).

Not much guidance on how to report scientific content (no reference to any reporting guideline).
ICMJE guidelines

- Most journals endorse these guidelines and ask authors to follow them.

They are a great resource for basic principles but are very general and journals need to provide more specific instructions in their journals where relevant.
ICMJE guidelines (2)

Reporting Guidelines for Specific Study Designs

Research reports frequently omit important information. Reporting guidelines have been developed for a number of study designs that some journals may ask authors to follow. Authors should consult the Information for Authors of the journal they have chosen.

The general requirements listed in the next section relate to reporting essential elements for all study designs. Authors are encouraged also to consult reporting guidelines relevant to their specific research design. A good source of reporting guidelines is the EQUATOR Network (http://www.equator-network.org/home/).
• Focus on scientific content of the article

• Provide structured advice on what to include in a research report

• Definition:
  – Specify a minimum set of items required for a clear and transparent account of what was done and what was found in a research study, reflecting in particular issues that might introduce bias into the research
  – Form: often as a checklist (flow diagram)

Moher et al. PLoS Med 2010
• Available RG vary greatly in
  – Scope
  – Development methods
  – Presentation of recommendations

• Scope – two major RG types
  – Study design / methodology
  – Specific discipline / clinical area
• Generic framework for reporting key methodology aspects of:
  – Main study designs (generic guidelines)
  – More specialised designs
  – Specific methods, evaluations, analyses

• No details relating to specific diseases

• Examples:
  • CONSORT (randomised controlled trials)
  • STROBE (observational studies in epidemiology)
  • STARD (diagnostic accuracy studies)
  • PRISMA (systematic reviews of RCTs)
  • COREQ (qualitative research)

• These are internationally accepted RG
  – Based on evidence
  – Consensus of relevant stakeholders (multidisciplinary group)
  – Endorsed by number of journals
• Key focus is on discipline / clinical area specific issues
  Disease / Type of investigation / Procedure / Combination of the above

• May or may not address general methodology items

• Examples:
  • TREND (non-randomised studies of behavioural and public health interventions)
  • REMARK (tumour marker prognostic studies)
  • STARE-HI (evaluation studies in health informatics)
  • STRICTA (CONSORT extension for acupuncture trials)
  • Economic evaluations in obstetrics
  • Quality of life assessment in cancer trials
RG outside clinical research

- Biomedical (laboratory) research – *omics* disciplines
  - MIBBI portal

- Veterinary sciences

- Animal research
  - ARRIVE guideline (animal laboratory research)
  - REFLECT statement (RCT in livestock)

- Forensic sciences

- Software engineering

... growing interest in reporting quality and RG development
Reporting guidelines

• Benefits of using RG:
  – Improved accuracy and transparency of publications
  – Easier appraisal of reports for research quality and relevance
  – Better further use of presented findings
  – Improved efficiency of literature searching

• Large number of RG exist but they are still not being widely known and used
  – Many reasons

..... To promote RG and support their implementation we set up the EQUATOR Network (launched in June 2008)
• **EQUATOR Network** is an international initiative set up to improve reliability and value of medical research literature

• Enhancing the **QUA**lity and **T**ransparency of health Research
EQUATOR focus

- Highlighting problems resulting from inadequate reporting and promoting rigorous research reporting
  - Accurate, complete, transparent, timely

- Provision of resources

- Education and training

- Research, evaluation, development

- Collaboration, global expansion
All in one place!

Library for health research reporting

The EQUATOR Network library currently contains:

- An introduction to reporting guidelines
- Comprehensive lists of the available reporting guidelines, listed by study type:
  - Experimental studies
  - Observational studies
  - Diagnostic accuracy studies
  - Biospecimen reporting
  - Reliability and agreement studies
  - Systematic reviews
  - Qualitative research
  - Mixed methods studies
  - Economic evaluations
  - Quality improvement studies
  - Other reporting guidelines
  - Reporting data
  - Statistical methods and analyses
  - Sections of research reports
    - Specific conditions or procedures.
  - Reporting guidelines under development
  - Reporting guidelines in other research fields
- Guidance on scientific writing
- Guidance developed by editorial groups
- Research funders’ guidance on reporting requirements
- Industry sponsored research – additional guidance
- Research ethics, publication ethics and good practice guidelines
- Development and maintenance of reporting guidelines
- Editorials introducing reporting guidelines
- Guidelines for peer reviewers
- Case studies: How journals implement reporting guidelines
- Examples of good research reporting

Quick links to reporting guidelines:

- CONSORT checklist and flow diagram
- CONSORT extensions
- TREND checklist
- STARD checklist & flow diagram
- STROBE checklists
- PRISMA checklist and flow diagram
- COREQ checklist
- SQUIRE checklist
- REMARK checklist

Download:
- Catalogue of reporting guidelines (full list)
EQUATOR website re-design

User testing

New website pages, including the Library for Health Research Reporting and database of reporting guidelines

WELCOME your: Comments Suggestions Impressions
Resources for editors and peer reviewers

The following resources will help you to produce high quality research publications:

- Developing a journal’s policies on research reporting
- Guidance for peer reviewers
- Other resources
- Do you want to write an editorial about EQUATOR?
- What can I do to support the EQUATOR Network’s effort

Developing a journal’s policies on research reporting

The following resources will be useful for developing or updating a journal’s policies and instructions for research reporting:

- Guidelines developed by influential editorial groups (WAME, ICMJE, COPE, etc.)
- Research ethics, publication ethics and good practice guidelines
- Publishers’ policies on publication ethics
- How to implement reporting guidelines in your journal. Guidance from EQUATOR
- Reporting guidelines
- Case studies: How journals implement reporting guidelines
- Editorials introducing reporting guidelines and new reporting policies into a journal
- Instructions to Authors (collected by the Mulford Library, University of Toledo; note that not all listed instructions provide good guidance on research reporting)

Guidance for peer reviewers

Reporting guidelines are useful tools for strengthening the peer review process. Here are a few examples of how to implement this in your journal:

- Examples of guidelines for peer reviewers
- Free online course for peer reviewers (developed by the Cochrane Eyes and Vision Group CEVG®US Project and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health)

Other resources

An instructional Guide for Peer Reviewers of Biomedical Manuscripts

International Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication (link to materials from all congresses held so far)

Nature Peer Review Debate (22 articles of analyses and perspectives from leading scientists, publishers and other stakeholders)


Other books relevant to research publication selected by Council of Science Editors:
http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/44a/pages/index.cfm?pageId=3348#online

Explore also EQUATOR Links section

Do you want to write an editorial about EQUATOR?

If you are considering writing an editorial about the EQUATOR Network resources and activities you might find useful some of the EQUATOR publications.
What can editors do to support good research reporting
Editors actions to consider (1)

- Incorporate an explicit philosophy of transparent, complete and accurate reporting and the use of reporting guidelines into your editorial policies.

- Explore the available reporting guidelines; select well developed guidelines appropriate for the reporting of research studies published in your journal.

- Ask or clearly instruct authors to adhere to these guidelines and motivate their use (incentives).
Editors actions to consider (2)

• Ask or instruct peer reviewers to refer to the appropriate reporting guidelines when assessing manuscripts

• Refer to the EQUATOR Network website in your 'Instructions to Authors'

• Promote and maintain the knowledge of principles of good reporting and available resources in your editorial office (new editors, etc.); EQUATOR newsletter
Key RG to consider implementing first

- CONSORT (randomised trials) – Sp / Port / Fr
- STROBE (observational studies) – Sp / Port
- STARD (diagnostic accuracy studies)
- PRISMA (systematic reviews) - Sp
- COREQ (qualitative research) - Sp
- SQUIRE (quality improvement studies) – Sp

- CONSORT endorsed by more than 600 journals
- Impact of CONSORT: journals’ adoption associated with better reporting
How can EQUATOR help editors?
1. Sharing editors’ experience with implementation of RG

- Examples from journals on the EQUATOR website

  - Jason Roberts, *Headache*: Reporting policies and the smaller journal

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**How journals implement reporting guidelines**

Some editors have shared with us their experience of setting up policies and procedures aiming to improve transparency and accuracy of research reporting in their journal. The contributions below describe first hand personal experience and provide valuable practical information for other colleagues contemplating the same activity.

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**Clinical trial reporting and the Journal of Investigative Dermatology (January 2019)**

**Professor Hywel Williams**, Clinical Trials Editor of the Journal of Investigative Dermatology, has shared with us how their journal implements the CONSORT Statement and compulsory trial registration and how it checks on compliance to CONSORT.

[Full text (pdf)]

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**Reporting policies and the smaller journal (January 2010)**

**Dr. Jason Roberts**, Managing Editor of *Headache*, summarised the experience of changing submission and peer review processes in their journal in order to raise the quality of published articles. *Headache* is a smaller sub-speciality medical journal and this article might be of interest to all editors of similar types of journals.

[Full text (pdf)]

Appendices:

- [Appendix 1: Behavioral/Nonpharmacological Clinical Trials Checklist for Headache](#)
- [Appendix 2: Case Reports Checklist for Headache](#)

Related articles (freely available):


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**Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology: Introducing new policies on research reporting into guidelines for authors and peer reviewers (April 2009)**

**Dr Chris Morris**, Associate Editor of the Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology.

[Full text (pdf)]
2. Setting up policies on research reporting – steps to consider

Guidelines for reporting health research: How to promote their use in your journal

Written by the EQUATOR Network Group; December 2011

Key points:
Reporting guidelines help to improve the accuracy, transparency and completeness of health research publications and increase the value of published research

EQUATOR provides free online resources in English at www.equator-network.org and in Spanish at www.espanol.equator-network.org including a comprehensive collection of reporting guidelines for health research studies

EQUATOR recommends that editors: explore the available reporting guidelines; select well developed guidelines appropriate for the reporting of research studies published by their journal; ask authors to adhere to these guidelines and ask peer reviewers to use them when assessing manuscripts

In this document you will find information on:

- How your journal can support better reporting of health research
  - How to introduce reporting guidelines into your journal
  - How to select reporting guidelines for your journal
  - How and where to use reporting guidelines in a journal
- How to refer to the EQUATOR Network and reporting guidelines in your Instructions to Authors and Instructions for Peer Reviewers
- How to describe the EQUATOR Network; text that might be inserted into your Instructions to Authors; examples of how some journals encourage the use of reporting guidelines and refer to EQUATOR

Examples of how some journals encourage the use of reporting guidelines and refer to EQUATOR

Editorials:


Not listed on Pubmed. This paper is freely available from Wiley at: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1526-4610.2009.01356.x/abstract


Tate RL, Douglas J. Use of reporting guidelines in scientific writings: PRISMA, CONSORT, STROBE, STARD and other resources. Brain Impairment. 2011 May;12(1):1-21. This paper is not listed on Pubmed and is not freely available from the publisher. The abstract can be accessed at: http://www.ubypol-link.com/AAP/doi/abs/10.1375/brim.12.1.1

Instructions to Authors:

BioMed Central journals publishing health research
http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcmed/life/ (accessed 16 September 2011)

"BMJ Medicine also supports initiatives aimed at improving the reporting of biomedical research. Checklists have been developed for a number of study designs, including randomized controlled trials (CONSORT), systematic reviews (PRISMA), meta-analyses of observational studies (MOOSE), diagnostic accuracy studies (STARD) and qualitative studies (SATS). We recommend authors refer to the EQUATOR network website for further information on the available reporting guidelines for health research, and the MIBIE Portal for prescriptive checklists for reporting biological and biomedical research where applicable. Authors are requested to make use of these when drafting their manuscript and peer reviewers will also be asked to refer to these checklists when evaluating these studies. For authors of systematic reviews, a supplementary file, linked from the Methods section, should reproduce all details concerning the search strategy. For an example of how a search strategy should be presented, see the Cochrane Reviewers Handbook."

BMJ
http://resources.bmj.com/bmj/authors/article-submission/article-requirements (accessed 16 September 2011)

"Article requirements
Please ensure that anything you submit to the BMJ conforms to the uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals, drawn up by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). The ICMJE requirements are long and comprehensive, and the BMJ also has specific requirements for different types of articles and particularly detailed ones for research articles: we urge you to look carefully at all of these."
3. Collaboration with PAHO

**EQUATOR Spanish website**
– launched July 2010

We are looking for **collaborators** to establish local centres of activities supporting better reporting of research studies.

Collaborators to help us further develop online resources in Spanish.
Biblioteca para la presentación de informes de investigación sanitaria

Actualmente, la biblioteca de EQUATOR Network contiene:

- Introducción a las directrices para la presentación de informes
- Listas completas de las directrices disponibles para la presentación de informes, enumeradas por tipo de estudio:
  - Estudios experimentales
  - Estudios observacionales
  - Estudios de precisión diagnóstica
  - Estudios sobre confiabilidad y acuerdo
  - Revisiones sistemáticas
  - Investigaciones cualitativas
  - Estudios de métodos mixtos
  - Evaluaciones económicas
  - Estudios de mejora de la calidad
  - Otras directrices para la presentación de informes
  - Presentación de datos
  - Secciones de informes de investigación
  - Aficiones o procedimientos específicos
- Directrices disponibles en español
  - Declaración CONSORT
  - Declaración TREAD
  - Declaración STROBE
  - Declaración PRISMA
  - Guía SQUIRE

Descargar:
- Un catálogo de las directrices
### Examples of resources in Spanish

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Recursos para editores y revisores externos

Los siguientes recursos le ayudarán a elaborar publicaciones de investigación de alta calidad:

- Desarrollo de las políticas para la presentación de informes de investigación de una publicación
- Orientación para revisores externos
- Otros recursos
- ¿Desea escribir un editorial sobre EQUATOR?
- Cómo puedo apoyar el esfuerzo de EQUATOR Network

Desarrollo de las políticas para la presentación de informes de investigación de una publicación

Los siguientes recursos servirán para desarrollar o actualizar las políticas e instrucciones para la presentación de informes de investigación de una publicación:

- Orientación elaborada por grupos editoriales (WAME, ICMJE, COPE etc.)
- Ética en la investigación, ética en la publicación y directrices de prácticas adecuadas
- Directrices para la presentación de informes
- Editoriales que presentan políticas nuevas y directrices para la presentación de informes en una publicación
- Instrucciones para autores (recopilado por la Biblioteca Mulford de la Universidad de Toledo; tenga en cuenta que no todas las instrucciones enumeradas proporcionan una buena orientación sobre presentación de informes de investigación)
Examples

- Implementing reporting guidelines
- Editorials
- Other possible journal activities
Welcome

Welcome to the new website of the Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública/Pan American Journal of Public Health (RPS/PJPH), an open access peer reviewed monthly journal, published as the flagship scientific and technical periodical publication by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), headquartered in Washington, D.C., the United States of America.

Read more...

About the new portal of the PAJPH

Starting with the September 2010 special issue, the Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública / Pan American Journal of Public Health (RPS/PJPH) is showcased within a redesigned Web site (http://www.paho.org/journal) featuring a smart line-up of new interactive tools enabled by Web 2.0 and capturing new possibilities for interaction and dialogue with readers through participative and collaborative networks.

Read more...

Blog Feed

Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública / Pan American Journal of Public Health

A site for authors, reviewers, editors and readers of the RPS/PJPH
1.6 Guidelines and research protocols

The RPSP/PAJPH follows the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals, which was developed and is maintained by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), and it is listed among the journals that follow these requirements. These guidelines, also known as the "Vancouver Style," apply to the entire journal, including ethical considerations, such as authorship and contributorship, peer review, conflicts of interest, privacy and confidentiality, protection of human subjects and animals in research, as well as editorial and publishing issues such as advertising, overlapping publications, references, and registering clinical trials.

The RPSP/PAJPH strongly recommends that authors follow the best research protocols available. Research protocols are described in the EQUATOR Network Resource Centre. Also, a complete list of the major biomedical research reporting guidelines is maintained and published by the U.S. National Library of Medicine. The most frequently used in the public health field are: CONSORT (for randomized controlled clinical trials), TREND (for nonrandomized evaluations of behavioral and public health interventions), STROBE (for observational studies in epidemiology), MOOSE (for meta-analyses of observational studies), QUOROM (for systematic reviews and meta-analyses of randomized trials), as well as the COCHRANE handbook (for systematic reviews of interventions).
Submission software – ideal place to reinforce the use of guidelines

Important to ensure consistency in your advice to authors and reviewers!
Guidelines for scientific communication good practices

ICMJE - International Committee of Medical Journal Editors
http://www.icmje.org/

EQUATOR - Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research
http://www.equator-network.org/

CONSORT Group - Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials
http://www.consort-statement.org/

STROBE - Strengthening the Reporting of OBServational studies in Epidemiology

NLM Research Reporting Guidelines and Initiatives: By Organization

MEDLINE/PubMed Research Guidelines Search

COPE - Committee of Publication Ethics - Code of Conduct
http://publicationethics.org/code-conduct

WAME - World Association of Medical Editors
http://www.wame.org/

CSE - Council of Science Editors
http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/services/draft_approved.cfm
Increasing attention has been paid to the importance of good reporting practices as they relate to the potential utility of a manuscript\(^{1}\).

Randomised controlled trials, when appropriately designed, conducted, and reported, represent the gold standard in evaluating healthcare interventions. However, randomised trials can yield biased results if they lack methodological rigor\(^{2}\). To assess a trial accurately, readers of a paper need complete, clear, and transparent information on its methodology and findings. Unfortunately, attempted assessments frequently fail because authors of many trial reports neglect to provide complete descriptions of that critical information\(^{3,4}\).

The CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) statement, originally published in 1996 and updated in 2001 and 2010, provides a 25 item checklist for a minimum set of recommendations for reporting the trial design, analysis, and result\(^{5}\). It was developed to assist authors in writing reports of randomised controlled trials, editors and peer reviewers in reviewing manuscripts for publication, and readers in critically appraising published articles. It provides guidance for reporting all randomised controlled trials, but focuses on the most common design type-individually randomised, two group, parallel trials, which accounts for over half of trials in the literature.

The evidence based approach that has been used for CONSORT also served as a model for development of other reporting guidelines, such as for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of studies evaluating interventions [PRISMA]\(^{6}\), and observational studies [STROBE]\(^{7}\).

However, as a potential drawback, a reporting guideline might encourage some authors to report fictitiously the information suggested by the guidance rather than what was actually done. Readers, peer reviewers, and editors should vigilantly guard against that potential drawback and refer, for example, to trial protocols, to information on trial registers, and to regulatory agency websites.

Although the Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia has not yet officially adopted the CONSORT, we encourage its use as well as other protocols such as STROBE and PRISM. This attitude will contribute to the improvement of our global insertion.
Transparent reporting of studies relevant to physical therapy practice

Como escrever de forma transparente artigos científicos relevantes para a prática da Fisioterapia

Leonardo O. P. Costa¹,², Chris G. Maher², Alexandre D. Lopes¹, Marcos A. de Noronha³, Lucíola C. M. Costa¹,²

Abstract

Background: There was a clear grow, in the last 2 decades, of up to 6 fold in scientific articles that are directly relevant to physical therapy practice. However, along with this fast grow; little attention has been given to transparency when reporting research methods and results. More recently, groups of researchers around the world have made successful attempts to address this issue by creating guidelines that will help researchers not only on the preparation of manuscripts but also on making sure that important details related to design and methodology are controlled and reported. Objective: To present four specific reporting guidelines, which are best known as "statements". Discussion: A network named EQUATOR (Enhancing the Quality and Transparency of Health Research) was created with the main mission of providing basic principles for responsible and transparent reporting. The EQUATOR network encompasses, among others, the CONSORT statement which is related to randomized controlled trials; the PRISMA statement, which is related to systematic reviews and meta-analysis; the STROBE Statement, which is related to observational studies; and the STARD statement, which is related to reporting of accuracy of diagnostic tests. Some journals have recommended the use of these statements, while in others their use is mandatory. The goal of the use of these statements by journals is to guarantee fast decisions regarding publication and the best possible quality of reporting. Ultimately, it will help readers, including physical therapists, to make better decisions in clinical practice.

Keywords: physical therapy; bias; guideline; editorial policies.

Resumo

Contextualização: Nas últimas duas décadas, ocorreu um notável crescimento, de até seis vezes, do número de artigos científicos que são diretamente relevantes para a prática da Fisioterapia. No entanto, junto com esse rápido crescimento, tem-se dado pouco atenção
Effect of editors’ implementation of CONSORT guidelines on the reporting of abstracts in high impact medical journals: interrupted time series analysis

Sally Hopewell senior research fellow, Philippe Ravaud professor, Gabriel Baron statistician, Isabelle Boutron associate professor

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Abstract

Objective To investigate the effect of the CONSORT for Abstracts guidelines, and different editorial policies used by five leading general medical journals to implement the guidelines, on the reporting quality of abstracts of randomised trials.

Design Interrupted time series analysis.

Sample We randomly selected up to 60 primary reports of randomised trials per journal per year from five high impact, general medical journals in 2006-09, if indexed in PubMed with an electronic abstract. We excluded reports that did not include an electronic abstract, and any secondary trial publications or economic analyses. We classified journals in three categories: those not mentioning the guidelines in their instructions to authors (JAMA and New England Journal of Medicine), those referring to the guidelines in their instructions to authors but with no specific policy to implement them (BMJ), and those referring to the guidelines in their instructions to authors with an active policy to implement them (Annals of Internal Medicine and Lancet). Two authors extracted data independently using the CONSORT for Abstracts checklist.

Main outcome Mean number of CONSORT items reported in selected abstracts, among nine items reported in fewer than 50% of the abstracts published across the five journals in 2006.

Results We assessed 955 reports of abstracts of randomised trials. Journals with an active policy to enforce the guidelines showed an immediate increase in the level of mean number of items reported (increase of 1.50 items; P=0.0037). At 23 months after publication of

Conclusion Active implementation of the CONSORT for Abstracts guidelines by journals can lead to improvements in the reporting of abstracts of randomised trials.

Introduction

Clear, transparent, and sufficiently detailed abstracts of journal articles reporting randomised trials are important, because readers often base their initial assessments of a trial on the content of the abstract. In some cases, health practitioners will have access only to the abstract, and could, therefore, make healthcare decisions based solely on the information in that abstract. As such, the journal abstract should be a clear and accurate reflection of what is included in the journal article. However, several studies have highlighted problems in the accuracy and quality of abstracts, including a lack of information about the trial methodology and the robustness of the trial results. Studies comparing the accuracy of information reported in a journal abstract with that reported in the text of the full publication have found claims that are inconsistent with, or missing from, the body of the full article. This inadequate
Reporting standards for research

The EJCI complies with main reporting standards for key types of research, including clinical trials (CONSORT and its extensions), meta-analyses (PRISMA), diagnostic tests (STARD), prognostic tumor markers (REMARK), microarrays (MIAME), observational studies (STROBE), genetic epidemiology (STREGA) and others as outlined in the EQUATOR website (http://www.equator-network.org) and in the EQUATOR article published in the first issue of January 2010 of EJCI (http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2362.2009.02234.x/abstract).

When a study is of a type that needs to adhere to such EQUATOR-listed standards, the authors should make appropriate citation to them to mention that the reporting is compliant with these standards.

Material and methods

Reporting of the study conforms to STROBE along with references to STROBE and the broader EQUATOR guidelines [17]. Universities of Ulm and Heidelberg. Detailed descriptions of the KAROLA study, which complied with the Declaration of Helsinki, have been published previously [18,19]. Reporting of the study conforms to STROBE [20,21].
Workshops on reporting

How we give you the best chance of getting your paper published and cited

Published on 09/19/12

The next BJOG author workshop will be part of the scientific programme at the XX FIGO 2012 World Congress.

**When:** Thursday 11th October 2012, 15:30-17:00

**Where:** XX FIGO 2012 World Congress, Hall 10, Domizia/Euphemia (D&E)

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BJOG
An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

**BJOG Author Workshop:**
How we give you the best chance of getting your paper published and cited

**Thursday 11th October**
Room Domizia/Euphemia (D&E) Hall 10
15:30-17:00

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