

# Reporting guidelines and journals

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# Research articles

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- Recognition that reports of research are written for multiple readerships
  - Clinicians, patients, researchers, policy makers
- Used by others for multiple purposes
  - systematic reviewers, practice guidelines, proposing new research
- Reports of research need to be fit for multiple purposes
  - Simera and Altman ACP Journal Club “Writing a research article that is “fit for purpose”: EQUATOR Network and reporting guidelines”. 2009;151: JC2-2-JC2-3

# Research articles

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- Published report is often the only record of research
- Reports of any type of research need clarity and transparency to:
  - enable the reader to comment on its reliability and validity
  - help the reader make informed decisions about what they have just read

# Role and function of journals in disseminating knowledge

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- A major conduit
  - Through publications
    - From editorials to research to guidelines
- Increasingly so for open access journals

# Role and function of journals in disseminating knowledge

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- COPE (Committee of Publication Ethics) code of conduct
  - “Editors should take all reasonable steps to ensure the quality of the material they publish...”
- “failures in the system of reporting clinical trials findings can result in harm to patients”
  - Glass KC, Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics 1994;22:327-338

# Over time journals have developed a suite of resources to help ensure the quality of their product (publications) is of the highest possible quality

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- Instructions to Authors
  - Schriger et al. Annals of Emergency Medicine 2006;48:743-9
- Peer review
- Editorial processes
  - Dickersin et al BMC Medical Research Methodology 2007, 7:44

# Have these suite of tools helped?

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- What do we know about that quality of reporting of health research?
- Substantial body of evidence that the quality of reporting research reports is not optimal
- New tool
  - Reporting guideline

# What is a reporting guideline?

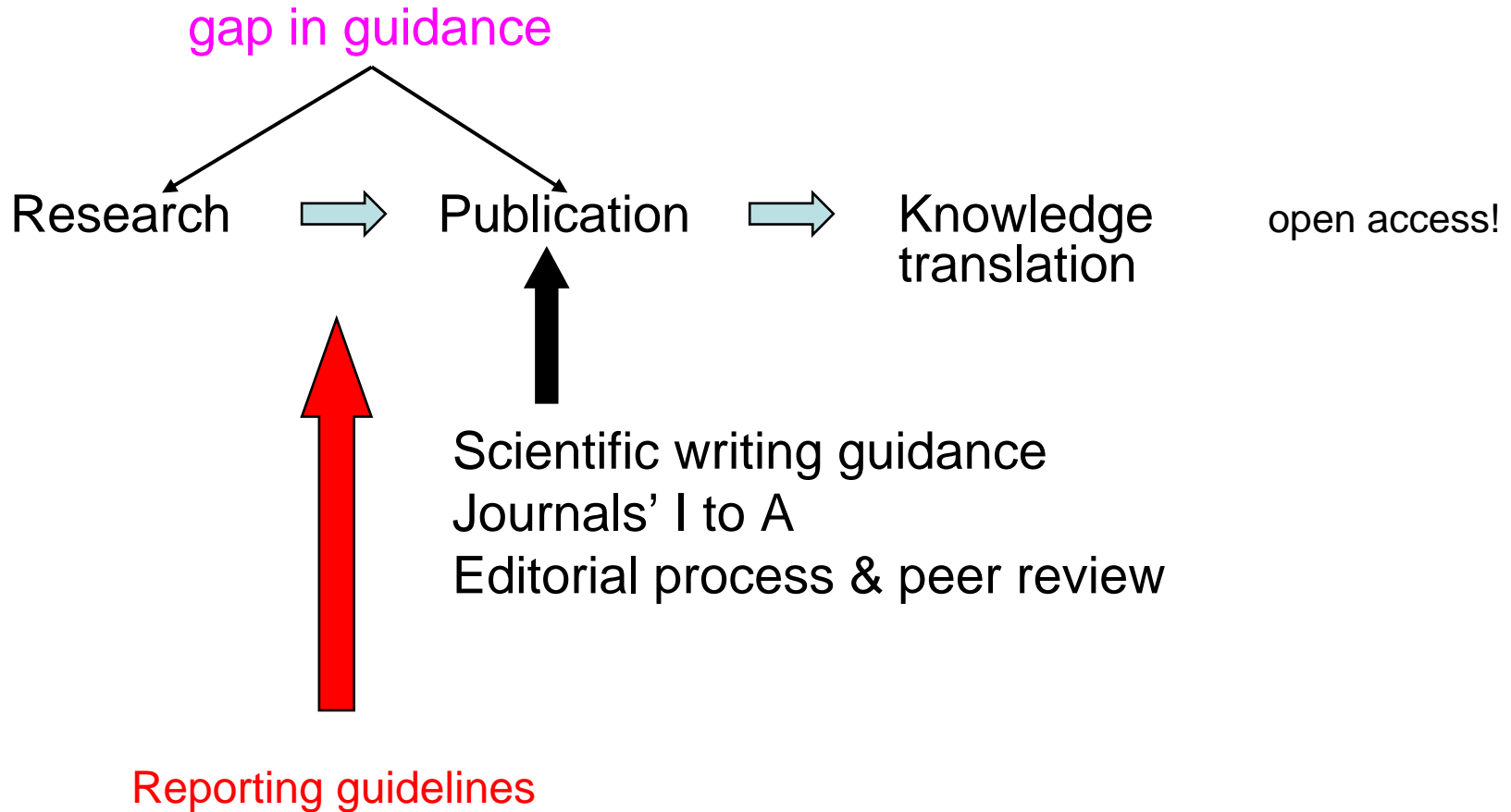
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- We define a reporting guideline as:
  - checklist, flow diagram, or explicit text to guide authors in reporting a specific type of research, developed using explicit methodology.
  - A consensus process is a crucial characteristic of developing a reporting guideline.



# Future focus for reporting guidelines in the knowledge generation cycle

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# Attributes of a good reporting guideline

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- Evidence based, whenever possible
- Editors involved from the beginning
- Face-to-face meeting
- Extensive post-meeting iteration
- Responsive to criticism
- Evaluation
- ‘Living’ document
- Updated regularly

# Do reporting guidelines improve the quality of reporting of health research reports?

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- CONSORT systematic review
  - total CONSORT items: mean difference (increase) of 3.7 items (95% CI: 2.09, 5.25)
    - Plint AC et al. Medical Journal of Australia 2006;185:263-267
- STARD
  - Smidt N et al. Neurology 2006; 67 (5): 792-7
- STRICTA
  - Prady SL et al. PLoS ONE 3(2): e1577

# Why wasn't there a stronger effect?

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- Time frame examining the intervention
- Uptake at journals
- Endorsement
- Adherence

# Better dissemination of uptake

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- Reporting guideline developers to journals
  - currently 40%
- Need to more actively engage knowledge translation experts as part of the development process
- Knowledge Translation Canada program
  - Barriers and facilitators to using reporting guidelines in journals
  - Developing and implementing a KT strategy
    - Funded by CIHR

# Endorsement by journals

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- 2003, 22% (36/166) high impact factor journals provided any mention of CONSORT
- 2008, 38% (62/165) of high impact factor journals
  - 73% relative improvement
- Same (121) journals in both years
  - 26% in 2003 and 39% in 2008

Altman DG. Endorsement of the CONSORT statement by high impact factor medical journals: survey of instructions for authors. *BMJ* 2005;330:1056-1057

Hopewell S, Altman DG, Moher D, Schulz KF. Endorsement of the CONSORT Statement by high impact factor medical journals: a survey of journal editors and journal 'Instructions to Authors'. *Trials* 2008;9:20

# Better endorsement by journals

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- Need stronger language for authors
- BMC
  - “We recommend authors refer to the EQUATOR network website for further information on the available reporting guidelines for health research, and the MIBBI 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”

# Using reporting guidelines within journals

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- In the submission process
  - Ask authors to complete checklist and include as part of the submission process
  - Publish completed checklist as part of web extra
- As part of the peer review process
  - Ask peer reviewers to use checklist to guide peer review assessment
- For editorial review and decision making