Implementing reporting guidelines in journals

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Researchers have primary responsibility for their research and information provided in the research manuscript.

Universities, research organisations
Using reporting guidelines (2)

- Journals play a key role as ‘gate keepers’
- Editors
- Peer reviewers
Guidelines for reporting health research: How to promote their use in your journal
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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.

Introduction

Although the ultimate responsibility for the design, conduct and accurate publication of health research studies rests with the researchers, editors should take all reasonable steps to ensure the quality of the material they publish. Reporting guidelines for health research are important tools to facilitate this task. They provide a basis for a complete and consistent presentation of randomized controlled trials and other studies. When reporting guidelines are followed, the accuracy and transparency of publications (2,3,5) are improved.

Examples of the reporting guidelines include:
CONSORT Statement for reporting randomised controlled trials (RCTs) (1,6)
PRISMA Statement for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses (7)

5.6: Reporting guidelines: a tool to increase completeness, transparency, and value of health research published in your journal

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“Authors, editors and publishers all have ethical obligations with regard to the publication of the results of research. Authors have a duty to make publicly available the results of their research in a rigorous, complete and transparent manner. In this context, reporting guidelines have a role to play.”

Box 1. Examples of common deficiencies identified in health research papers. (A list of selected references documenting the above deficiencies is included in a commentary by Simera et al.)
EQUATOR future plans

• Work with editors to make the use of reporting guidelines in journals (and by authors and reviewers) easier

• Develop practical tools (flowcharts, templates, etc.)

• Any ideas welcome
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