

Implementing reporting guidelines in journals

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Using reporting guidelines

- Researchers have primary responsibility for their research and information provided in the research manuscript
- Universities, research organisations



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Dr Iveta Simera
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Dear Iveta

I am writing on behalf of the Health Services Research and Policy Group at the Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, to congratulate the Equator-Network on the important work it is doing to improve the quality reporting of health research. The presentations at the 2012 EQUATOR-Network Symposium graphically illustrate both the extent and implications of the continuing deficiencies in the reporting of health research.

Failure to report health research accurately, completely and transparently, in a timely manner, is unethical and breaches the implicit social contract that health researchers have with participants in health research. It is also extremely inefficient and a waste of public and academic resources, and impedes evidence-informed decisions by clinicians and policy makers. Poor or failed reporting of health research is also potentially very harmful to patients as it can create a spurious impression of effectiveness where none exists, block the dissemination of knowledge about effective treatments, and prevent adverse effects being identified.

The Health Services Research and Policy Group would therefore like to wholeheartedly endorse the EQUATOR-Network and its excellent work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Iveta Simera', with a horizontal line underneath.

Using reporting guidelines (2)

- Journals play a key role as 'gate keepers'

- Editors

- Peer reviewers

Editors of research publications

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

- [Developing journal's policies on research reporting](#)
- [Guidance for peer reviewers](#)
- [Do you want to write an editorial about EQUATOR?](#)
- [What can I do to support the EQUATOR Network's effort](#)



Developing journal's policies on research reporting

To help editors with selecting appropriate reporting guidelines to improve the accuracy and completeness of the research they publish, the EQUATOR Network has prepared a brief outline of the steps and issues editors might consider when introducing these guidelines into their journals:

- [How to implement reporting guidelines in your journal: guidance from EQUATOR](#)
- Simera I.: [Reporting guidelines](#): a tool to increase completeness, transparency, and value of health research published in your journal. Chapter 5.6 (in proof) in Smart P., Maisonneuve H. and Polderman A. (eds) Science Editors' Handbook European Association of Science Editors. www.ease.org.uk.

The following guidance from our Library will be useful for developing or updating journals' policies and instructions on 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](#)
- [Reporting guidelines](#)

Other useful resources:

- Case studies: [How journals implement reporting guidelines](#)

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 research papers rests with researchers, editors "should take all reasonable steps to ensure the quality of the material submitted for publication". Reporting guidelines for health research are important tools to facilitate this task. They are needed for a complete and clear account of study methods and subsequent findings. Adopting reporting guidelines improves the accuracy and transparency of publications (2-5). Examples of the reporting guidelines include:

CONSORT Statement for reporting randomised controlled trials (RCTs) (6)

PRISMA Statement for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses (7)

Smart P., Maisonneuve H. and Polderman A. (eds) *Science Editors' Handbook*
European Association of Science Editors. www.ease.org.uk

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 on human

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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