EQUATOR Network
Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research

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Abstract
Scientific publications are the primary means of sharing research findings. Quality and completeness of research description are essential to assess study quality and relevance. Despite its importance, the quality of reporting in journal articles is unsatisfactory. The EQUATOR Network is a new international initiative that aims to improve the reliability of medical publications by promoting transparent and accurate reporting of health research. The Network will provide resources and training relating to the reporting of health research and assist in the development, dissemination and implementation of reporting guidelines.

The project’s current focus is on the development of an internet-based resource centre and a training programme. The EQUATOR website already hosts a collection of reporting guidelines. Those resources will be expanded into a comprehensive digital library for health research reporting.

The training programme will focus on important issues in health research reporting and efficient use of reporting guidelines. Journal editors and peer reviewers will be targeted first. EQUATOR also aims to develop customised training workshops addressing specific needs of interested organisations.

The EQUATOR Network is not an isolated project; it should be seen in the context of other ongoing initiatives that aim to increase transparency and reliability of health research (e.g., trials registration). Securing enough financial resources and support from influential organisations is crucial to sustain the EQUATOR Network and the successful achievement of its goals.

Rationale
Clarity and completeness of health research publications is not satisfactory. Clinical practice and public health policy decisions in the evidence-based era depend on high quality information about research findings. There is, however, a wealth of evidence that much published health research is reported poorly14. Under reporting prevents those studies from contributing to systematic reviews and clinical practice guidelines, with potentially serious consequences for clinical practice and further research.

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By endorsing the EQUATOR Network’s effort and by promoting the use of its resources organizations can contribute significantly to the wider implementation of reporting guidelines. Only support on a wide scale can generate meaningful change in people’s behaviour as seen recently with quick adoption of clinical trials registration requirements.

EQUATOR Network funding
At present, EQUATOR is solely funded by the NICE UK. We are negotiating for further support from other major public health research funders in the UK, Canada and USA. The EQUATOR Network is seeking funds to support its current activities and development of new educational and research projects that would complement its core programme.

Issues are global and the initiative needs major international support not only from public funding bodies but also from a private sector—in particular, publishing and the pharmaceutical industry. We are currently working on a funding model for private sector support for EQUATOR.

We welcome any suggestions, contacts and contributions.

www.equator-network.org