

*Session title:*

**Reporting guidelines: a tool to increase the quality of health research published in your journal**

*Speakers:*

Prof Doug Altman, Director, Centre for Statistics in Medicine, University of Oxford, UK and Chair of the EQUATOR Network Steering Group

Dr Jason Roberts, Managing editor, Headache: the journal of head and face pain, US

Dr Iveta Simera, Head of Programme Development, EQUATOR Network, Centre for Statistics in Medicine, University of Oxford, UK

*Outline:*

Substantial evidence continues to demonstrate widespread, serious deficiencies in research publications. Journal editors have power to considerably improve the reporting quality of research papers they publish.

This session will summarise major deficiencies in health research publications, give an overview of available reporting guidelines to aid the completeness and transparency of research papers, and discuss practical aspects of implementation of these guidelines in journals.

*Session programme:*

Time	Talk title	Speaker
10.50 – 10.55	Wellcome, introducing the session	Iveta Simera
10.55 – 11.20	Deficiencies limiting reliability and usability of published research papers	Doug Altman
11.20 – 11.45	Making sense of reporting guidelines	Iveta Simera
11.45 – 12.20	Towards the Successful Implementation of Reporting Guidelines at Biomedical Journals	Jason Roberts
12.20	Session ends	Iveta Simera

## *Abstracts:*

### **Deficiencies limiting reliability and usability of published research papers**

*Prof Doug Altman, Director, Centre for Statistics in Medicine, University of Oxford, UK and Chair of the EQUATOR Network Steering Group*

Current electronic methods of scientific publishing offer increased opportunities for publishing all research studies and describing them in sufficient detail. Yet the health research literature still suffers from many shortcomings that seriously undermine the value and utility of research publications and waste scarce resources invested in the research. In recent years there have been several positive steps aimed at improving this situation, such as a strengthening of journals' policies on research publication and the wide requirement to register clinical trials.

In my talk I will outline key deficiencies identified in the current health research literature, discuss causes of these shortcomings and highlight the consequences of inadequate reporting of research. I will also discuss some possible solutions to improve transparency and usability of research papers, including the use of reporting guidelines, defining core outcomes, registration of studies, etc.

### **Making sense of reporting guidelines**

*Dr Iveta Simera, Head of Programme Development, EQUATOR Network, Centre for Statistics in Medicine, University of Oxford, UK*

Although the ultimate responsibility for the design, conduct and accurate publication of research studies lies with the researchers, editors "should take all reasonable steps to ensure the quality of the material they publish" (COPE Code of conduct). Guidelines for reporting health research are important tools to facilitate this task. They specify a minimum set of items needed for a complete and clear account of study methods and subsequent findings. Adherence to reporting guidelines improves the accuracy, transparency and usability of publications.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of new reporting guidelines motivated mainly by the insufficient quality of published reports. This creates a rather confusing situation for editors who need to know which guidelines exist and decide which to support and recommend to authors to follow.

The EQUATOR Network is an international initiative that works towards improving this situation. The EQUATOR team collates resources facilitating the reporting of health research, provides education about the available guidelines, and supports the development of new reporting guidelines. The EQUATOR website ([www.equator-network.org](http://www.equator-network.org)) aims to be a valuable source of information for authors, journal editors, peer reviewers, and guideline developers. The site currently provides links to over 200 reporting guidelines and other useful resources relating to good publication of research studies.

This presentation will introduce key reporting guidelines and resources hosted on the EQUATOR website and will suggest where journals can use them to achieve high standards in the reporting of research they publish.

## **Towards the Successful Implementation of Reporting Guidelines at Biomedical Journals**

*Jason Roberts, PhD*

*Managing Editor, Headache: the journal of head and face pain, US*

The evidence of both the need for, and effectiveness of, reporting guidelines at biomedical journals is compelling. This highly practical presentation provides a template for the successful preparation and launch of a comprehensive reporting standards policy. It does so by demonstrating how individual journals can incorporate reporting guidelines into routine submission and review procedures in an effort to improve content quality.

The presentation will open with a review of the steps needed to first devise a reporting standards policy, then successfully implement the policy, both in terms of launching and then maintaining the programme from an operational perspective. Barriers and potential confounders to the effective deployment of a policy are then considered and potential solutions proposed. Finally, and of particular use to busy editorial offices, a simple 9-step guide to implementing the use of reporting guidelines at a journal is described. Evidence from actual implementation efforts will be used to demonstrate a successful strategy, while also recognizing potential problems and how they can be overcome.

The presentation is designed for editors, publishers and editorial office staff. All the proposed implementation steps can be applied to journals large and small and are designed to be submission system agnostic. The primary learning goal of the presentation is to outline proven practical steps towards implementation, while ensuring standards can be effectively raised without placing burdens on all journal stakeholders (authors, editors, reviewers). Following the presentation, attendees will be able to adapt, and utilize, the steps outlined at their own journal.