Librarians can help address reporting concerns in the biomedical literature particularly, for systematic reviews – here’s how!

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Workshop leaders

- Isla Kuhn, Medical Librarian, University of Cambridge Medical Library
- Tom Roper, Clinical Librarian, Brighton and Sussex NHS Library and Knowledge Service. Tom.Roper@bsuh.nhs.uk
- Rebeca Isabel-Gómez, Information & Knowledge Manager, Andalusian Health Technology Assessment Agency
- Alicia Fátima Gómez Sánchez, Research & Scholarly Communications Information Manager, Library and Computing Services, University of Hertfordshire
- Shona Kirtley, Senior Research Information Specialist, EQUATOR Network, University of Oxford. shona.kirtley@csm.ox.ac.uk
Common deficiencies in biomedical research reporting
Deficiencies in biomedical research reporting

- A research article is often the only available record that a research study was conducted

- Scientific manuscripts should present sufficient data so that the reader can fully evaluate the information

- Readers need a clear understanding of exactly what was done and found
5 main areas where deficiencies have been identified

- **Non-reporting (or delayed reporting) of studies**
  - often studies with disappointing results

- **Incomplete reporting**
  - e.g. the omission of crucial aspects of the research methods, incomplete results or inadequate reporting of harms

- **Selective reporting**
  - e.g. selectively reporting patient outcomes or aspects of the analysis

- **Misleading reporting**
  - e.g. misinterpretation of study findings or using ‘spin’

- **Unacknowledged discrepancies between sources**
  - E.g. where the publication conflicts with the study protocol or the information contained in the register
Incomplete or unclear reporting

- Hundreds of published reviews show that key elements of *methods* and *findings* are commonly missing from journal reports.

*"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."*  
from *What’s so Funny About Science?* by Sidney Harris (1977)
What is missing from descriptions of treatment in trials and reviews?

Replicating non-pharmacological treatments in practice depends on how well they have been described in research studies, say Paul Glasziou and colleagues.

Adequacy of Published Oncology Randomized Controlled Trials to Provide Therapeutic Details Needed for Clinical Application

Adequate description

Exercise prescription: a case for standardised reporting

Empirical Evidence for Selective Reporting of Outcomes in Randomized Trials: Comparison of Protocols to Published Articles

An appeal to medical journal editors: the need for a full description of laboratory methods and specimen handling in clinical study reports

Publication Bias in Antipsychotic Trials: A Meta-analysis Comparing the Published Literature to the Food and Drug Administration Approval Database

Reporting and Interpretation of Randomized Controlled Trials With Statistically Nonsignificant Results for Primary Outcomes

Electronic search strategies to identify reports of cluster randomized trials in MEDLINE: low precision will improve with adherence to reporting standards