

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nutrition science is controversial in its essence, as it deals with behavioural, cultural, and sometimes religious aspects of people's lives. Its objectives, methods, and findings are constantly questioned and criticised, often with arguments based on individual opinion. There are inherent limitations to nutritional research, and the consequences of mainstreaming controversial conclusions, whether they are based on good or poor quality research, usually overpower the impact of evidence-based dietary guidelines and public health policies.

The implementation of new knowledge in nutrition science cannot wait for flawless study designs or perfect understanding of causal pathways, as with all fields. However, it is not clear that nutrition science is up to its task, despite important advances in the field. New research methods are available to deal with many of the most important limitations and sources of bias in observational and experimental study designs. Guidance on how to handle the complex role of the food industry in nutrition science is also constantly evolving. Yet issues requiring more in-depth consideration still remain, including the lack of field-specific guidelines for transparent reporting and the presence of spin in both original research and systematic literature reviews, with or without meta-analyses.

We are conducting a series of systematic literature reviews to identify the main limitations in the reporting of randomised clinical trials (RCTs) of nutritional interventions; check adherence to existing relevant reporting guidelines (CONSORT and TIDIER); and quantify the presence of spin in RCTs of nutritional interventions. We also aim to assess the strength of the conclusions of systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses in the area of nutrition. The results of these reviews will feed into a consensus-driven process for developing extensions to the CONSORT and PRISMA reporting guidelines that focus on nutritional intervention RCTs and systematic literature reviews, with or without meta-analyses.

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