



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Declaration of transparency: A step towards complete reporting of research articles[☆]



Declaración de transparencia: un paso hacia la presentación completa de artículos de investigación

To the Editor:

Reporting of methods and results of medical research articles is often inadequate or incomplete. Bad reporting can be due to authors being vague about what they did and found. Inadequate and incomplete reporting prevents the use of such reports in health care decision-making (for example, by clinicians wishing to implement the most effective interventions and programs), and also results in considerable waste of resources used to conduct the research.¹ Systematic reviews of the reporting quality of published articles have found common deficiencies in almost every aspect of a study report.^{2–4}

The research community urgently need to implement changes to the reporting of research articles, especially those presenting randomised trials and systematic reviews, which inform clinical decision-making and are important to clinicians, scientists and policy makers. Reporting guidelines, such as CONSORT for randomised trials [<http://www.consort-statement.org/>], STROBE for observational studies [<http://www.strobe-statement.org/>] or PRISMA for systematic reviews and meta-analyses [<http://www.prisma-statement.org/>], can help authors provide a complete and transparent description of how they conducted their study and what they found. Published research has demonstrated that endorsement and implementation of reporting guidelines has improved the quality of reporting of several important aspects of research articles.⁴

[☆] Please cite this article as: Catalá-López F, Hutton B, Page MJ, Vieta E, Tabarés-Seisdedos R, Moher D. Declaración de transparencia: un paso hacia la presentación completa de artículos de investigación. Rev Psiquiatr Salud Ment (Barc.). 2016;9:63–64.

More serious than incomplete reporting (which sometimes occurs unintentionally or due to journal space constraints) are deliberate efforts to manipulate the reporting of trial methods and results. Failure to publish entire studies (usually those that are statistically negative or inconclusive) and selective reporting of the most favourable results within published reports, can produce a biased picture of the complete evidence. A prominent number of systematic reviews of the literature on psychiatry and neuroscience research suggest that publication and other reporting biases are prevalent across diverse domains.^{5–8} Furthermore, authors often distort the views and interpretation of their findings in the presence of financial conflicts of interest and ethical issues.^{9,10} Although the presence of potential conflicts of interest is not necessarily an indication of biased reporting of studies, authors often fail to disclose such information which is unacceptable.^{9,11}

To help overcome some of these reporting deficiencies, some of us recently suggested journals could take immediate action by asking authors to sign a “declaration of transparency” as part of the submission process.¹¹ Medical journals have taken steps to respond to this “call to action”.^{11–14} With the idea to continue with their transparency and reporting efforts, we would like to encourage the journal editors of *Revista de Psiquiatría y Salud Mental* to consider endorsing and implementing the “declaration of transparency”. In particular, journal editors can support this initiative by revising their instructions to authors so that a completed publication transparency declaration is required as part of the submission process [BOX, see proposal for authors submitting manuscripts]. This action

Box “Proposal of transparency declaration”.

Transparency declaration:

The lead author^a affirms that this manuscript submitted to *Revista de Psiquiatría y Salud Mental* is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study being reported; that no important aspects of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned (and, if relevant, registered) have been explained.

^a The manuscript’s guarantor.

can be seen as complementary to the current practice of asking authors to disclose conflicts of interest and will encourage authors to reflect more carefully on how they write their research article and to check that they have adhered to relevant reporting guidelines. We also invite other journals in the field of clinical psychiatry and mental health to support and join the initiative through the EQUATOR (Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research) network [<http://www.equator-network.org/>].

In the era of open science and transparency, with randomised trials and systematic reviews having critical impact on clinical practice, changes are needed to improve complete and clear reporting of research articles. Clinical practice deserves an accurate and transparent reporting of scientific research. It is our conviction that endorsing and implementing the “transparency declaration” is one way to help scientific research reaches its full potential.

Funding

None.

Conflict of interests

None of the authors have a conflict of interests regarding this report. DM is one of the developers of the *Declaración de Transparencia* (Transparency Statement). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and must not be understood or stated that they are made in the name of, or reflects, the position of an institution.

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