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Use of EQUATOR Network Checklists in Research Articles Published in Health and Caring

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Editorial

The 21st century has been marked by an unprecedented surge in information, including a plethora of publications that present the findings of diverse research studies. This vast expanse of professional literature can be challenging to navigate. Consequently, the quality of these studies has become a focal point. Quality, however, can be evaluated from multiple perspectives. Undoubtedly, the quality of the research study's design is a critical factor. Yet, this alone is insufficient. The quality of the written research report or manuscript, submitted to a journal's editorial office with the intention of disseminating the study's advancements and outcomes, must also be considered. Furthermore, the quality of the journal itself is relevant. If a journal's processes are well-structured, the likelihood of publishing a substandard article diminishes. Transparency is another crucial aspect tied to quality. It is a vital prerequisite, without which achieving quality is nearly impossible. In other words, if a study's results lack transparency, how can one evaluate its quality? And how could it be replicated, perhaps with a larger sample size or in a different setting? The task would indeed be quite difficult.

At present, a variety of resources and tools exist that aid in achieving transparency and quality in detailing the process and results of primary research or different types of review articles. Many professional journal editors endorse or even mandate their usage. A popular choice among these are various guidelines provided by an international initiative or network, known by the acronym EQUATOR (Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research) Network. These guidelines can be accessed at the EQUATOR Network's website (<https://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/>). As of now, the network offers more than 600 guidelines, with new ones continually being added. Furthermore, based on user experience and advancements in science and technology, previously published guidelines are regularly updated and enhanced.

Contributors to our Health and Caring journal are advised to adhere to the suitable guideline they choose from the provided website, based on the research design of their respective study. The EQUATOR Network's homepage offers guidelines for the most frequently used research designs. For instance, for a cross-sectional study, authors should follow the guideline known as The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) Statement. As stated on the EQUATOR Network's website, this guideline has been published in full in eight different journals (for

example, refer to von Elm et al., 20227). A corresponding checklist is also available, enabling authors to ensure that the manuscript submitted to the editorial office includes all necessary information. Authors fill out this checklist by specifying the page number of the manuscript where each item of the checklist has been addressed. For instance, the aforementioned STROBE checklist includes an item titled "Setting" in the "Methods" section. This item requires a description of the research study's setting, along with information about the data collection period. Authors, therefore, note in the checklist that this information is described in the manuscript, say, on page 3. The checklist also specifies that the research design should be included in the article's title. Authors are expected to submit this checklist to the editorial office along with the article they intend to publish in our journal.

When preparing a review article, it is essential to identify whether it is a systematic review or a scoping review, for instance. The scoping review is a relatively favoured type of review article, for which it's recommended to use a checklist named PRISMA-ScR (Tricco et al., 2018). This checklist can be located on the website of the guideline titled "The PRISMA2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews", where a link to the relevant publication is also provided. A similar approach is adopted for other research designs.

We are confident that this procedure will enhance the transparency and quality of manuscripts submitted to the editorial office. Furthermore, employing guidelines from the EQUATOR Network will simplify the tasks of our reviewers. Overall, it will expedite and streamline the entire review process, and also boost the likelihood of authors getting their manuscripts published. Lastly, this requirement supports best practices in relation to publication activities in health research.

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