

## **Descriptions of 14 deliberate errors [posted as supplied by the author]**

### **Major errors**

#### *Poor justification for conducting the study*

A statement that the authors failed to put their study into context by providing relevant information from previous studies and justifying why there was a need for a new study.

#### *Biased randomisation procedure*

A statement that the randomisation method (e.g. randomisation by family name or day of the week) was inadequate and could result in systematic bias.

#### *No sample size calculation reported*

A statement that a sample size calculation had not been reported.

#### *Unknown reliability and validity of the outcome measures*

A statement that there was insufficient information about the measurement properties (i.e. reliability and validity) of the outcome measures used e.g. quality of life questionnaires. A simple statement that the instruments were not referenced was not counted as this did not comment on the unknown measurement properties of the instruments.

#### *Failure to analyse the data on an intention-to-treat basis*

A statement that the authors were incorrect in their assumptions that intention-to-treat analysis was inappropriate.

#### *Poor response rate*

A statement that the response rate was low.

#### *Unjustified conclusions*

A statement that the authors made inappropriate conclusions beyond their findings by inappropriately generalising their results to other areas of care which were not under study.

#### *Discrepancy between data reported in the abstract and results*

A statement that there were discrepancies between the data reported in the main text of the paper and that reported in the abstract.

#### *Inconsistent denominator*

A statement that the number of patients / cases reported in the papers are inconsistent and difficult to follow.

### **Minor errors**

#### *No ethics committee approval*

A statement that there was no indication that the study had been approved by an ethics committee.

#### *No explanations for ineligible or non-randomized cases*

A statement that the flow of participants through each stage of the study was not clear and that the authors failed to provide explanations for ineligible or non-randomized cases.

*Inconsistency between data reported in main text and tables*

A statement that there were discrepancies between figures reported in the main text and those reported in the tables.

*Failure to spot word reversal in text leading to wrong interpretation of results*

A statement that the words in the text describing the findings reported in a table were inverted leading to the wrong interpretation.

*Hawthorne effect*

A statement that the authors failed to report a possible Hawthorne effect i.e. that participants were aware that they were in a study and may have behaved differently from usual.