

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Reporting quality for abstracts of randomised trials on child and adolescent depression prevention: A meta-epidemiological study on adherence to CONSORT for abstracts
AUTHORS	Wiehn, Jascha; Nonte, Johanna; Prugger, C

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Davaasambuu, Sarantsetseg Research Foundation of CUNY
REVIEW RETURNED	15-Mar-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Thank you very much for the opportunity to review this scientific article. This article examines very important issues related to quality of abstract for scientific articles. I have a few recommendations for the authors' consideration to possibly improve quality of the article.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Overall, the article is very long, detailed, and not easy to follow. For example: Discussion section is 5.5 pages and very detailed reviewing one particular article published by Song et.al. It is worth mentioning how this article differs from the previous study, but I am not sure if the article should be reviewed in so much detail.2. The article has too much detailed information. For example, "Study Selection", some parts of "Data collection" sections can be removed entirely because it is redundant. Figure 1 displays all the information very clearly. In addition, "Patient and public involvement" section can be removed because the study examines previously published articles. No need to declare it unless it is required by the journal.3. The authors stated that they reviewed articles that were published "between January 1, 2003 and August 5, 2020 to assess reporting quality before and after the publication of CONSORT-A and C guidelines." (p.7). However, they did not discuss anything about reporting quality differences in before and after the guidelines. The authors stated only one sentence referring to it: "Moreover, RQS increased each year after publication of CONSORT-A in 2008." (p11.).4. Scientific articles should be simple and easy to follow. However, this article is not easy to follow and understand especially some of the graphs. The article started with the importance of the quality of the abstracts for scientific articles, CONSORT-A and C guidelines and their implementation, and how journal characteristics associated with the quality of the abstracts. However, the study is too long and complicated and the main messages are lost. I
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	<p>recommend shortening the article and focus on the main objectives.</p> <p>5. The study also does not examine or discuss anything related to abstract structure requirements and word limitations from different journals. Some journals require that the abstract to be less than 100 words without any structure. It is very difficult to include all information that's recommended by the CONSORT guidelines when authors have only 100 words. I think this might be one of the main factors for quality of abstracts; and useful to examine if there is any association between journal requirements for abstract structure and word limits and quality of the abstracts.</p>
REVIEWER	He, Hong Wuhan University, Hubei-MOST KLOS & KLOBM, School & Hospital of Stomatology
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Mar-2022
GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>The authors of this manuscript carried out a meta-epidemiological study to assess the adherence of CONSORT for abstracts of randomised trials on child and adolescent depression prevention. Evaluation of reporting quality is an important topic, and this article is clear to read and easy to follow. I'd like to give several suggestions towards the direction of strengthening their submission:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In Methods section, the RCTs inclusion period (Line 95) and searching updated date (Line 100) was contradictory. 2. In Methods section, 2.3 study collection, it is recommended that authors report the results of study selection in the Results section, and the Methods section only presents the process/method of study collection. 3. Why did the authors choose these study characteristics (number of authors, sample size, number of sampling points, abstract word count, journal impact factor and year of publication) as investigated factors associated with overall reporting quality? 4. Try to simplify the conclusion.

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1: Dr. Sarantsetseg Davaasambuu, Research Foundation of CUNY

Thank you very much for the opportunity to review this scientific article. This article examines very important issues related to quality of abstract for scientific articles. I have a few recommendations for the authors' consideration to possibly improve quality of the article.

Dear Dr Sarantsetseg Davaasambuu,
We appreciate your supportive comments and constructive suggestions.

1. Overall, the article is very long, detailed, and not easy to follow. For example: Discussion section is 5.5 pages and very detailed reviewing one particular article published by Song et.al. It is worth mentioning how this article differs from the previous study, but I am not sure if the article should be reviewed in so much detail.

Our response

Thank you for this advice. As suggested, we have shortened the discussion and aimed to be more concise, in particular regarding the comparison to previous research.

2. The article has too much detailed information. For example, "Study Selection", some parts of "Data collection" sections can be removed entirely because it is redundant. Figure 1 displays all the information very clearly. In addition, "Patient and public involvement" section can be removed because the study examines previously published articles. No need to declare it unless it is required by the journal.

Our response

In line with the suggestion, we have merged and shortened the sections "Study selection" and "Data collection" (p. 7, l. 113-130). We would leave the "Patient and Public Involvement" section, since this declaration is indeed required by the BMJ Open (p. 8, l. 150-152).

Reviewer 1: Dr. Sarantsetseg Davaasambuu, Research Foundation of CUNY

3. The authors stated that they reviewed articles that were published “between January 1, 2003 and August 5, 2020 to assess reporting quality before and after the publication of CONSORT-A and C guidelines.” (p.7).

However, they did not discuss anything about reporting quality differences in before and after the guidelines. The authors stated only one sentence referring to it: “Moreover, RQS increased each year after publication of CONSORT-A in 2008.” (p11.).

Our response

Thank you for this comment. We agree that this comparison should be further discussed in light of the stated objective. Thus, we included the following in the results (p. 10, l. 189-191).

“An additional before-and-after comparison illustrates that the RQS was higher in the period from 2008 to 2020 (median: 36.7, Q1: 30.0, Q3: 43.5) than in the period from 2003 to 2007 (median: 32.0, Q1: 22.9, Q3: 41.8).”

And reflected on these results in the discussion (p. 13, l. 274-279).

“In line with previous studies, we found that abstract reporting quality was higher in the period since the publication of CONSORT-A as compared to the period before. [21, 27, 30, 35, 39, 41, 42] However, our data do not allow causal conclusions. Our data indicate that overall reporting quality is improving since 2008: in contrast to the period from 2003 to 2007, the RQS increased between 2008 and 2020. Chhapola et al. observed a similar trend comparing the reporting quality of trial abstracts published in high-impact paediatric journals in 2003 to 2007 and 2010 to 2014.[78]”

4. Scientific articles should be simple and easy to follow. However, this article is not easy to follow and understand especially some of the graphs. The article started with the importance of the quality of the abstracts for scientific articles, CONSORT-A and C guidelines and their implementation, and how journal characteristics associated with the quality of the abstracts. However, the study is too long and complicated and the main messages are lost. I recommend shortening the article and focus on the main objectives.

Our response

We sincerely hope the shortenings in line with your comments, in particular of the methods and discussion sections, and further emphasis on the comparison of study periods has made our manuscript easier to read and more to the point.

Reviewer 1: Dr. Sarantsetseg Davaasambuu, Research Foundation of CUNY

5. The study also does not examine or discuss anything related to abstract structure requirements and word limitations from different journals. Some journals require that the abstract to be less than 100 words without any structure. It is very difficult to include all information that's recommended by the CONSORT guidelines when authors have only 100 words. I think this might be one of the main factors for quality of abstracts; and useful to examine if there is any association between journal requirements for abstract structure and word limits and quality of the abstracts.

Our response

We agree that journal requirements and reporting quality of abstracts may be related. Because changing over time, it was unfeasible for us to assess these journal requirements for the publication years of the articles included (2003-2020). However, we analysed the word count and structure of the abstracts themselves. Since authors generally follow journal guidelines, the abstracts may largely reflect the requirements at the time of publication. We thus added the following sentences in the limitations section (p. 14, l. 303-305).

“We did not assess associations between reporting quality and journal requirements, such as word count limits and format structure. However, the word count and structure of the included abstracts may largely reflect these journal requirements.”

Reviewer 2: Prof. Hong He, Wuhan University

The authors of this manuscript carried out a meta-epidemiological study to assess the adherence of CONSORT for abstracts of randomised trials on child and adolescent depression prevention. Evaluation of reporting quality is an important topic, and this article is clear to read and easy to follow. I'd like to give several suggestions towards the direction of strengthening their submission:

Dear Prof. Hong He,
Thank you for your engaging and kind feedback.

1. In Methods section, the RCTs inclusion period (Line 95) and searching updated date (Line 100) was contradictory.

Our response

Thank you for pointing this out. The update was in August 2020. We have corrected section 2.2 accordingly (p. 6, l. 104-107):

“We searched the electronic literature databases [...] on March 9, 2019 and updated the search on August 8, 2020.”

2. In Methods section, 2.3 study collection, it is recommended that authors report the results of study selection in the Results section, and the Methods section only presents the process/method of study collection.

Our response

We agree and made the necessary changes so that we now exclusively report methods and results in section 2.3 (p. 7, l. 114-130) and section 3.1 (p. 8, l. 156-170), respectively.

3. Why did the authors choose these study characteristics (number of authors, sample size, number of sampling points, abstract word count, journal impact factor and year of publication) as investigated factors associated with overall reporting quality?

Our response

We have pre-specified these study characteristics based on previous meta-epidemiological studies. For transparency, we have included these earlier studies in Supplementary S4 and included the following at the end of 2.3 “Study selection and data collection” (p. 7, l. 128-130):

“Based on previous studies, we pre-specified seven study characteristics previously associated with overall reporting quality (Supplementary S4). We operationalized these study characteristics using the variable definitions in Supplementary S5.”

4. Try to simplify the conclusion.

Our response

We tried to simplify the conclusion as follows (p. 15, l. 311-321).

“Reporting quality plays a crucial role in generating and translating scientific evidence as it increases transparency and accuracy and thereby enables health professionals to identify, evaluate and replicate trial results. CONSORT extensions are valuable tools for authors, reviewers and editors to formulate trial abstracts in a transparent and comprehensible way. Although these tools have been openly available for years, the reporting quality of RCT and CRT abstracts on the prevention of depression in children and adolescents is suboptimal. According to our results, some CONSORT-A and -C items are adequately reported in most depression prevention trial abstracts, and this should be the benchmark for all items. Interventions aimed at strengthening abstract reporting quality are thus needed. [84] These efforts will very likely not only benefit the scientific community and practitioners in the field, but may ultimately improve mental health care for children and adolescents worldwide.”

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Davaasambuu, Sarantsetseg Research Foundation of CUNY
REVIEW RETURNED	06-Jun-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	The authors addressed all critiques and recommendations in the revised version
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REVIEWER	He, Hong Wuhan University, Hubei-MOST KLOS & KLOBM, School & Hospital of Stomatology
REVIEW RETURNED	09-Jun-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS

The authors have revised this manuscript very well. I do not have any other suggestions on it.