



Colombian Journal of Anesthesiology

Revista Colombiana de Anestesiología

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Enhancing the value of research reports: time for complete reporting

Aumentando valor a los reportes de investigación. El tiempo del reporte completo

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Editorial dissemination of research is the reflection of a scientific production and reward system which is not at its best at the present time in the world. Health sciences literature has been under the spotlight over the past few years and, as a result, its ability to provide valid, unbiased answers is widely challenged.¹ There is growing evidence that suggests that a vast amount of biomedical scientific literature may contain significant bias² and distortion,³ may not be reproducible,⁴ and that its methods may have been hijacked to serve vested interests, including financial gain.⁵ Regrettably, these occurrences have given rise to a growing amount of research waste.⁶ In this bed of thorns, each of us as academics, researchers, and users are partly to be blamed.

Strategies for improvement must encompass various aspects of scientific generation, ranging from questions that are relevant to patients and clinicians, the appropriate use of scientific and analytical methods in search for answers, all the way to continuing access to scientific results and providing users with thorough and potentially useful research manuscripts.⁷

As part of the process of continuous improvement of the *Colombian Journal of Anesthesiology*, one of the questions

that first come to mind is as editors, what should be our response and our contribution to mitigate these issues and to improve the future landscape? The first idea is to ensure a judicious, transparent, efficient, and fair process leveraged by the top quality of our authors, supporting them with education, editorial assessments, reviews, and instructions. As new Editor in Chief, I feel deeply honored by this appointment by the Colombian Society of Anesthesiology and Resuscitation, and committed to focus my work on this purpose.

In the current issue of the journal, we have included an update of our “instructions to the authors,” in an attempt at meeting existing demands and challenges for improvement. Two changes are highlighted: first, the *Colombian Journal of Anesthesiology* supports and embraces the guidelines, statements, and checklists of the EQUATOR network (*Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research*). These guidelines are the result of constant work during the past 2 decades focused on helping authors, editors, and reviewers in their job of verifying the transparency and completeness of research reports.⁸ Guidelines for the submission of complete reports do not dictate how research studies must be conducted, nor

How to cite this article: Calvache JA. Enhancing the value of research reports: time for complete reporting. *Colombian Journal of Anesthesiology*. 2019;47:209–210.

Read the Spanish version of this article at: <http://links.lww.com/RCA/A896>.

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Colombian Journal of Anesthesiology (2019) 47:4

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/CJ9.0000000000000134>

do they assess their internal validity directly. However, more detailed reports are expected to improve the way in which future studies are designed and conducted.⁹

In an attempt at influencing the development of protocols and research projects, guidelines and their early adoption by the authors may potentially create awareness regarding critical methodological and analytical details that need to be considered in these phases of the scientific process.

Incomplete research reports are of no use to anyone. They do not help readers because they do not provide enough information to judge the validity of the results; they do not help patients in terms of decision-making and they could actually cause distortions or contribute to the problems described; and they do not help researchers or new authors because they affect reproducibility and planning of new studies.

Along these lines, one of our priorities is to ensure availability of the full report of the manuscripts for the readers and/or users of the published research. The current adoption does not only mean support to the network's indication, but a step to get our authors to use (and attach to their submissions) the checklists in order to verify and maximize research manuscript completeness. In case of doubt regarding the selection of the appropriate guideline for reporting each type of research, there is a support section in the EQUATOR network website (<http://www.equator-network.org/2015/12/17/findtherightreportingguideline/>).^{10,11} Interestingly, Vilaró et al¹² have recently shown that adherence to completeness statements enhance the possibility of citation in the scientific literature. A complete report is far more useful and potentially citable.

Second, we have added, for original papers, a short section which gives readers a brief answer to 2 questions: (1) What do we know about this problem? and (2) What does this study contribute that is new? Answers to these 2 questions improve the visibility of the research since they offer a quick specific overview of the study problem and the reported results.

Although this is a short section that the author may (possibly) write at the end of the manuscript, its objective goes further. New research projects should not be undertaken unless at the time of their inception the

proposed questions cannot be satisfactorily answered based on the available evidence.⁷ Moreover, as researchers, it prompts us to rethink the problems, our lines of research, and the current methods used to answer them appropriately.

Finally, success in any editorial process is built on the work of 4 groups of players: authors, reviewers, editors, and the publishing team. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize them all and to express my gratitude for the support I have received. We will continue to work and receive all ideas designed to help us improve. On behalf of the editorial team of the *Colombian Journal of Anesthesiology*, we extend an invitation to all our readers, authors, and the scientific community at large to continue to support the journal with their invaluable contributions and their active participation in the review process.

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