Reviewer’s report

Title: What the newspapers say about medication adherence: a content analysis

Version: 1 Date: 4 July 2013

Reviewer: Tania Bubela

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Re: 'What the newspapers say about medication adherence: a content analysis'
Nicola A Goodfellow, Basima A Almomani, Ahmed F Hawwa and James C McElnay
BMC Public Health
Research article

Major Compulsory Revisions

The submitted article addresses an important issue of adherence to medication. It examines how a major source of health information for the public, newspapers, covers this issue. The study is tightly conceived and does not stray beyond its bounds. The comments below are to assist the authors in clarifying their key messages and are intended to improve an already the article. The discussion needs work.

Introduction

1. I would restructure the introduction so that the key aim of the paper is upfront and clear. The paper is not about how the public gain health information from newspapers, but about how adherence to medications is portrayed in an important source of health information for the public. I would therefore move the third paragraph to the start of the introduction, expand on the importance of medication adherence and then add the newspaper discussion after.

2. The statement on internet use for personal health information currently reads as a tack on without being connected to the newspaper discussion. It really is a justification statement for a study limitation and should be framed as such—e.g., while internet searches provide… studies show that newspapers continue to be… or something along those lines.

Methods

3. Under “Data extraction” define the term ‘article slant’. Is this a “Frame” or similar—“slant” is not a technical term used in media studies.

4. Methods are generally now written in the active rather than passive voice for clarity and style. Please remove all passive voice, which will both shorten and clarify the methods section (e.g., NG selected the relevant articles… as opposed to “relevant articles were selected by NG”…).
5. Clarify the criteria were used in assigning quality of information on adherence. The lack of clarity on this point may also simply be a stylistic one. It is not clear whether the sentences that follow are in fact the criteria.

6. Please expand on how you collected PubMed articles displayed in figure 2 in the methods section.

Results

7. I find it confusing that the authors switch between collective percentages (UK and US) and country-specific percentages. If no significant difference exists, cite only the collective statistic, do not compare the 2 countries. Make it clear in the methods that Chi-square was used (assuming an adjusted p-value for repeated tests).

8. There are many percentages embedded into the text making it difficult to read the results section. I suggest that the authors incorporate tables with the country-specific percentages and collective percentages for the various constructs and refer to the tables in the text.

Discussion

9. The discussion would benefit from an introductory paragraph and a statement that provides a roadmap for the content to follow. The initial statement is one short, orphaned sentence on novelty, which detracts from the quality of the discussion.

10. The next sentence is repetitive of the results. Do not repeat results in the discussion but summarise key findings and then contextualize them in the literature.

11. In the Results section you mention that articles used the terms compliance, concordance and adherence interchangeably and that this is not appropriate. You begin to address this in the Discussion section, but more detail would be necessary to contextualize your argument.

12. Add internet and other media sources, which may be more important to the public but were not analysed, as a key limitation of the study. This includes advice and brochures from family physicians, etc.

13. The conclusion that society as a whole is poorly informed cannot be made from these results. That is a different study on what people know about medication adherence from multiple sources. Your only conclusion is that NEWSPAPERS do not cover the issue well.

14. You recommend that investigators should provide accurate press releases to mediate to quality of media reporting on their publications. What are the limitations of this recommendation, in terms of how journalists actually write stories? Are there any other practical recommendations you might suggest?

Minor Essential Revisions

15. Dates for search strategy repeated (once in the “Study design” section, then again in the “Search strategy and eligibility” section).
16. You note that your kappa range is 0.54-0.96. Please provide a reference that suggests that a kappa score of that range is indicative of acceptable inter-coder reliability.

17. On page 7 bottom paragraph there is a missing period.

18. Please pay attention to citation formatting. For example: errors in #5 and #40.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

None to declare.