Reviewer’s report

Title: Levels of Evidence: A Comparison between Top Medical Journals and General Pediatric Journals

Version: 2 Date: 7 October 2014

Reviewer: Bryan Haughom

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Levels of Evidence: A Comparison between Top Medical Journals and General Pediatric

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Introduction: Surely other studies have performed similar analyses (in pediatrics as well as medical and surgical subspecialties). Please provide references to similar studies, as this may help readers understand the importance of such work.

2. Line 54: Please include the actual number of articles included.

3. Line 63 – 64: “Following CONSORT criteria, and promoting studies of high LOE compels authors and readers to make more evidence-based decisions.” Is this the conclusion that can be drawn from this abstract?

4. Line 116: would be helpful to have a table of the top journals you selected from; which journal were excluded because of their ‘basic science’ content. Should be enumerated.

5. Line 123: Why would you exclude those with lower cite counts? Isn’t the cite count related to the impact factor?

6. Line 126: Please explain why subspecialty journals were not included in your analysis.

7. Line 146: Please provide citation for CONSORT guidelines.

8. Line 147: If both reviewers reviewed all papers, please provide the process by which discrepancies in LOE were settled. Furthermore, it would be ideal to provide interrater reliability of the LOE determination.

9. Line 154: Please provide more explanation of the Oxford guidelines. Additionally please provide the original citation for the Oxford guidelines, not a paper that used them.

10. Line 168: Your hypothesis was one sided, why were two tailed t-tests used for all comparisons?

11. Line 170: A difference of 0.5 in LOE seems an arbitrary number. Please describe how you arrived at this number.

12. Line 187: Please elaborate as to what ‘pediatric surgery’ includes. Does this include all pediatric surgical subspecialties?
13. Lines 190-193: What statistical test was used to make these comparisons? An ANOVA would seem appropriate however this was not mentioned in the methods.

14. Line 193: This comment applies to findings throughout the results section. Please provide all comparisons and p-values. If there are too many for the body of the text, an appendix would be appropriate.

15. Line 204: What statistical test was used to make this comparison? Again, an ANOVA would seem appropriate however this was not mentioned in the methods.

16. Line 210: same comment as line 204.

17. Line 175 – 226: Please provide exact p-values.

18. Line 216: There should be a description of your interrater reliability assessment in the methods section.

19. Line 231 – 232: While it may be tempting to say that ‘it is clear that the majority of information used for evidence-based practice comes from GPJ’ your paper does not necessarily support this claim. Please rephrase.

20. Line 233: You’ve arrived at the conclusion that ‘it is crucial to encourage the submission and publication of good quality LOE and RCTs to GPJ.’ Could it not be just as crucial for physicians to read general journals as well? I don’t think you can make this claim.


22. Line 240: You may want to address the barriers to CONSORT’s wide spread use.

23. Lines 249 – 260: You have outlined the major findings of your paper in this paragraph, however you have failed to relate these findings to prior studies. The sole factor discussed is the impact of ‘age’ on LOE. Please discuss the other findings of your paper as they relate to the literature at large.

24. Line 262- 265: These statements are contrary to the last sentence of your introductory paragraph. Please consider revising your introductory paragraph.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Line 119: don’t start a sentence with an acronym
2. Line 219: Capitalize ‘grading’
3. Line 238: Please remove the word ‘tremendous’

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
None.