Reviewer's report

Title: Simple decision tree tool to facilitate author identification of reporting guidelines during submission: a before-after study

Version: 0 Date: 28 Sep 2017

Reviewer: Iveta Simera

Reviewer's report:

The aim of the presented study was to investigate the impact of online decision tree on authors' ability to identify appropriate reporting guideline for their manuscript during the submission process.

Although many reporting guidelines exist together with a consensus opinion that they are helpful tools for authors their use is still not routine and awareness of their existence is still patchy. This combined with difficulties many researchers have in clearly identifying the general 'study type' (e.g. RCT, cohort study, etc.) for their particular research study limits the use and potential benefit of reporting guidelines. It is quite difficult to conduct meaningful research exploring barriers and facilitators of reporting guidelines uptake or implementing effective interventions to increase their efficient use. This study is therefore informative and adds the evidence where it is needed.

I would like to commend the authors for high standard of their manuscript. It is only very rarely that I review a manuscript that is succinct yet clear and informative.

My only comments / suggestions for authors to consider include the following:

Abstract:

1. 8 - suggest splitting into 2 sentences … had ('before'). After 6 weeks …

1.34: I do not believe your end statement "majority of authors failed to correctly identify … that non were relevant" is supported by your data: looking at your results in the table 2 where you state that from 301 'before' manuscripts 225 had applicable reporting guideline - this means that 76 did not. Line 30 in the table states that 72 manuscripts/authors correctly stated that no RG is relevant. To me this reads that actually majority of authors stated this fact correctly.
I am not disputing the first part of your concluding statement that majority of authors still failed to correctly identify the relevant guidelines.

Introduction:

L. 41-43:

Suggest taking out 'consensus' - not all 300 RG on the EQUATOR website are based on consensus

Suggest deleting the last part of your sentence "including many reporting guidelines …" - slightly confusing

Methods

Intervention, l. 33: suggest rewording the sentence (perhaps: This automated decision tree asks authors to provide yes-no answers regarding their study to identify the study type and to suggest relevant reporting guideline.)

Outcomes, l.1-3 (Study types with well-known …from the analysis) - I found this description slightly confusing.

Results

L.41,42: There seems to be a tiny discrepancy in numbers for the 'before cohort: is it 300 or 301 (compare your text and both tables)

Discussion

Not sure if the authors want to elaborate a bit on why they got the results they got - what might be the possible reasons (lack of people's knowledge in the general research methodology area, perhaps not so clear wording in the online tool, too late stage for people to consider this responsibly???)

Overall I believe this is a useful paper and I support its publication. Thank you for the opportunity to review it; it was a pleasure to read.
**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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Until June 2017 I led the development of the EQUATOR programme in Oxford. Our centre collaborated on the development of the EQUATOR wizard for identification of relevant reporting guidelines.

My salary has been paid from the EQUATOR grant funding.

I / EQUATOR had no involvement in this study.

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