Reviewer’s report

Title: A guide to applying the Good Publication Practice 3 Guidelines in the Asia-Pacific Region

Version: 0 Date: 18 Jun 2019

Reviewer: Lisa M. DeTora

Reviewer's report:

RIPR-D-19-00014

Applying the Good Publication Practice 3 Guidelines in the Asia-Pacific Region: A practical guide

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this important work. I wish you luck with the process of revision.

General:

- Despite my very strong bias in favor of a paper of this type, the current draft is not publishable yet. It contains promising ideas; however, the authors must give themselves permission to come out and state their opinions clearly. In fact, the paper reads as though the authors are almost fearful of making a clear, strong point. This is a shame because guidance for the AP region is probably needed—the problem for me as a reader is that I feel unconvinced that this claim has been adequately supported.

- The authors appear to be affiliated with organizations that, on the whole, are unlikely to be experiencing specialized problems over and above those of other global employees working with multilingual and multicultural authoring teams. For example, English is a primary language in Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. And it is worthy of note here that the specific study of the English language actually began in India, which may confer an advantage.

- The authors really, in my opinion, need to do the following:

  o Define existing good practice guidelines
Support the claim that these guidelines do not address the AP region enough—OR—simply state that the AP region has special concerns that make further clarification needed.

Explain what the special concerns of the AP region are and then show how to address these special concerns within existing guidelines.

Given that GPP4 is underway, perhaps make some recommendations for how that guideline could better address global audiences.

Abstract:

- This (like the full paper) is quite wordy. For example, the authors could open by saying that the ICMJE, GPP and other powerful guidelines (like COPE) for biomedical publications focus on problems in Western countries. A strong argument/support for this claim needs to be made because (with the possible exception of COPE), existing guidelines work hard to address global audiences.

- A more serious problem is the way the authors seem to claim that problems of writing English as a foreign language are unique to the Asia Pacific region. Many authors in the EU, LatAm, Middle East and North America are also in this situation. The mention also makes the focus of the paper unclear. If the main point is that the specialized problems of publication in the Asia Pacific region are not addressed in existing guidelines, then it would be clearer to say this outright and focus the paper on this problem.

Introduction

- The paper starts out with a telling mistake (likely the result of collaborative authoring or cut and paste error): the ICMJE Recommendations provide guidance on the design, conduct, and authorship of studies to be published in biomedical journals as well as advice to editors.

- Page 3, lines 14-20: It would be helpful to see more information about the other guidelines (like their names), aside from ICMJE. For example, an explanation of GPP would be helpful here.

- Page 3, lines 30-35: this is not helpful information for the current argument. I'd delete.

- Page 4, lines 1-12: I know from experience and exposure that it's fairly common for publications professionals to complain about poor awareness of "publication ethics" in
the AP region. My question is how much of this material is published, by whom, and what the authors think is unfair about these characterizations. For example, people in some cultures may feel that it is unethical not to list the funder in the author list, even though ICMJE guidelines say otherwise. It's important here for the authors to come out and make a claim: what is your opinion and why? What problems exist? How does this specific paper present a solution?

- Page 4, paragraph 2: it says "studies" but I see only one citation in that sentence and only 2 in the paragraph. Another problem here is the lack of explanation as to how authorship, retraction, and ICMJE are connected. I agree that a claim like that could be made, but it would need to be written out for the reader. I also see no reference to GPP3, which is in the title of the paper.

- Following paragraphs: As a reader who has actually read the source materials (and is very much in favor of the idea behind this paper) I find the text almost impenetrably wordy. The authors need to come out with a clean, specific argument that makes particular claims and connects GPP, ICMJE and the points to be made later in the paper.

Applying GPP3 to AP Region

- I find this section of the paper (and the long table) very confusing because it is unclear how the authors see:
  
  o The main purpose of GPP3
  
  o How GPP3 is focused on regions other than AP (a claim that I would need to see better support for, because I personally do not believe that GPP3 ignores the AP region)
  
  o Special considerations for the AP region by specific stakeholders. What should authors do? Editors? Publication professionals?

- I also find the cases to be distracting and unconvincing as part of the overall argument of this paper… a better placement for these could possibly be the main ISMPP members page. But my impression is that the cases distract from the argument rather than support it.

Additional Considerations

- This section is also confusing. It feels as though the authors are trying to assemble a stand-alone section that is not connected to the rest of the paper. Reorganizing the paper around special considerations for the AP region would be helpful in addressing this problem.
Need for leadership

Unfortunately, this section reads as though the purpose of the paper is to establish a separate professional organization for the AP region. I would suggest that this seems to suggest that there should be separate leadership for every region—which seems cumbersome to me as a member of the profession. It would be more helpful to the global community to have more of a sense of who in the AP region is doing which work and why. For example, journals and authors in India and Pakistan have done a lot of work to address specific publication ethical problems (like ghostwriting and plagiarism), suggesting (to me at least) that there is already some academic leadership in the area that already has a global impact.

Conclusions:

The conclusions, for me, are not supported by the contents of the paper. It really feels as though the paper was authored in sections and the colleagues were too polite to edit each others' work enough to create a clear and cohesive argument. This is a shame because this paper addresses a vitally important topic but the reader who doesn't already understand the problems of the region will not be able to understand the text as written.

References

Given the authors' affiliations, I do not see adequate references to recent publications by ISMPP members and groups. The Foster paper on poster presentations is interesting (but perhaps unsustainable), and other papers have been appearing on a fairly regular basis.

It would be helpful to have a better understanding of how the authors chose these specific papers from the vast array of publications available

Table

This table is confusing and, for me, unhelpful. For instance, it's not useful to say that AP region colleagues should follow local laws. It would be more helpful to have some better information about what those laws are, which countries in the region have compatible (and incompatible) requirements and regulations and how different stakeholders should comply. It would also be more helpful to organize these tables around specific special circumstances for the AP region rather than GPP3 headings.
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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

ISMPP funded one day of my attendance at their annual meeting and a hotel room so I could present at the congress. I am also quite biased in favor of the type of research reported in this paper.

I have no other competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.
I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal