Wellcome Open Research

Article Type Guidelines for Referees

We ask referees to focus on the quality of the research and whether the article is scientifically sound (i.e. whether the work has been well designed, executed and discussed) and provides all relevant information, not whether it is of importance or particular novelty. In addition to this, we ask that referees take the following questions into consideration when reviewing different article types:

Research Articles

Research articles should present original findings, such as results of basic and translational research, clinical and epidemiologic studies, or clinical trials, or the outcomes of research projects in social sciences and humanities. Null and negative findings and reanalyses of previous studies leading to new results, as well as confirmatory results, are all suitable. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.

- Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?
- Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?
- Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?
- If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?
- Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?
- Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

Method Articles

Method Articles describe a new experimental, observational, or computational method, test or procedure (basic or clinical research), and should have been well tested. This includes new study methods, substantive modifications to existing methods or innovative applications of existing methods to new models or research questions. Technical articles that describe tools that facilitate the design or performance of experiments, provide data analysis features or assist medical treatment such as drug delivery devices are suitable. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.

- Is the rationale for developing the new method (or application) clearly explained?
- Is the description of the method technically sound?
- Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the method development and its use by others?
• If any results are presented, are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

• Are the conclusions about the method and its performance adequately supported by the findings presented in the article?

**Study Protocols**

Study protocols describe protocols for any study design, including epidemiological studies and systematic reviews, or protocols defining research questions and empirical methods in social sciences and humanities. Study pre-protocols (i.e. discussing provisional study designs), study protocols for pilot and feasibility studies are also suitable. All protocols for randomised clinical trials must follow the SPIRIT guidelines; protocols for systematic reviews should be registered and follow the PRISMA-P guidelines. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.

• Is the rationale for, and objectives of, the study clearly described?

• Is the study design appropriate for the research question?

• Are sufficient details of the methods provided to allow replication by others?

• Are the datasets clearly presented in a useable and accessible format?

**Systematic Reviews**

Systematic Reviews are usually based on medical interventions, animal model studies, humanities or social sciences studies. Systematic Reviews must deal with a clearly formulated question and use systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically assess the relevant research. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.

• Are the rationale for, and objectives of, the Systematic Review clearly stated?

• Are sufficient details of the methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?

• Is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

• Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results presented in the review?

**Software Tools**

A Software Tool Article should describe the rationale for the development of a new tool and details of the code used for its construction. The article should provide examples of suitable input data sets and include an example of the output that can be expected from the tool and how this output should be interpreted. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.
• Is the rationale for developing the new software tool clearly explained?

• Is the description of the software tool technically sound?

• Are sufficient details of the code, methods and analysis (if applicable) provided to allow replication of the software development and its use by others?

• Is sufficient information provided to allow interpretation of the expected output datasets and any results generated using the tool?

• Are the conclusions about the tool and its performance adequately supported by the findings presented in the article?

Clinical Practice Articles

Clinical Practice Articles must relate to a series of case reports of patients who were given similar treatment. The cases do not need to describe an especially novel or unusual cases. They should be described following the CARE guidelines. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.

• Is the background of the case’s history and progression described in sufficient detail?

• Are enough details provided of any physical examination and diagnostic tests, treatment given and outcomes?

• Is sufficient discussion included of the importance of the findings and their relevance to future understanding of disease processes, diagnosis or treatment?

• Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for other practitioners?

Research Notes

Research Notes are small, often preliminary studies. They can be single-finding papers that can be reported with one or two illustrations (figures/tables), descriptions of unexpected observations, and lab protocols. Null and negative findings, as well as confirmatory results, are all suitable. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.

• Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

• Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?

• Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?

• If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

• Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

• Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?
Data Notes

Data Notes are brief descriptions of research datasets that include details of why and how the data were created; they do not include any analyses or conclusions. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.

- Is the rationale for creating the dataset(s) clearly described?
- Are the protocols appropriate and is the work technically sound?
- Are sufficient details of methods and materials provided to allow replication by others?
- Are the datasets clearly presented in a useable and accessible format?

Case Reports

Case Reports must be original and provide adequate detail of a single patient case. They do not need to describe an especially novel or unusual case as there is benefit from collecting details of many standard cases. Case Reports should follow the CARE guidelines. The peer review should focus on whether the paper is fully scientifically sound, not on the likely impact of the work.

- Is the background of the case’s history and progression described in sufficient detail?
- Are enough details provided of any physical examination and diagnostic tests, treatment given and outcomes?
- Is sufficient discussion included of the importance of the findings and their relevance to future understanding of disease processes, diagnosis or treatment?
- Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for other practitioners?

Correspondence

Correspondence articles should provide a scholarly discussion of, and focus on, one or more previously published articles in Wellcome Open Research.

- Is the rationale for commenting on the previous publication clearly described?
- Are any opinions stated well-argued, clear and cogent?
- Are arguments sufficiently supported by evidence from the published literature or by new data and results?
- Is the conclusion balanced and justified on the basis of the presented arguments?