

Reporting Guidelines

A major goal of any scientific journal is to increase the volume and quality of its scholarly contribution to a particular field of study. More than 90% of journals' hosting Web sites present guidelines for submission and evaluate the rigor and impact of each contribution (Hirst & Altman, 2012). Submission and reporting guidelines are important tools used by journals to screen submissions and direct contributors to align with their editorial policy, with the goal of standardizing the scholarly contribution to the journal's field of study. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly (APAQ)* is no exception in this regard. The recently revised journal mission statement was formulated "to stimulate and communicate scholarly inquiry relating to physical activity that is adapted in order to enable and enhance performance and participation in people with disability." While the volume of submissions has increased in recent years, reaching over 100 new original submissions during each of the last 3 years, *APAQ*'s editorial board also wants to secure a high level of inquiry.

The journal's submission guidelines for authors state, "All empirical papers must be based on research methods and designs appropriate to the question(s) addressed, conforming to whatever standards of excellence are expected with the approach(es) adopted. Bearing in mind this condition, qualitative and quantitative methods are thus equally welcome." This statement still leaves it up to the submitter or reviewer to decide what the appropriate standards of excellence are. Since a variety of research tools are available in both quantitative and qualitative research, the margins for selecting an appropriate method and writing style are quite broad, and authors are often in need of more specific guidance. Therefore, a number of journals in the rehabilitation and disability research area have recently decided to join the Equator Network, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of medical research. This network advises potential contributors and reviewers to use specific guidelines for each type of report, for example, the CONSORT (updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomized trials: Mohr et al., 2010), STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology: von Elm et al., 2007), and PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses: Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009) guidelines. Altogether, the Equator Network recommends 10 key sets of reporting guidelines.

Since its establishment, *APAQ* has been directed toward diversity in research contribution, which has sometimes made it difficult to judge scholarship. Founding Editor Geoffrey C. Broadhead wrote in an editorial comment (1985) that in that particular volume "content was brought in an easy-to-read style, by permitting an expanded interpretation of results, and by encouraging the elaboration of opinions" (p. 263). Past *APAQ* editors and associate editors have been sensitive to the need for reporting scholarly work, and several contributions were published in this regard. For example, in 1992 Reid wrote an editorial proposing guidelines for selecting reviewers for *APAQ*. Sutlive and Ulrich (1998) provided useful recommendations for future presentation of statistical results and their interpretation. These included

“calculating and reporting effect sizes, selecting an alpha level larger than the conventional .05 level, placing greater emphasis on replication of results, evaluating results in a sample size context, and employing simple research designs” (p. 103). In a review article, Cervantes and Porretta (2010) used Sutlive and Ulrich’s recommendations and assessed 115 articles retrieved through the search engines PubMed and SPORTDiscus, measuring physical activity of persons with disability. They found that only 26 (22.6%) of the publications met all recommended criteria.

In an editorial comment, Sherrill and O’Connor (1999) extended the perspective beyond measurement and identified 13 criteria for reporting scholarly work, including a rich and theory-derived introduction, establishing the basis for stimulating dialogue, a sound methodology, and a clear and informative presentation of the results. Another quality indicator recommended in that editorial was to align with the American Psychological Association and require person-first language in all submissions.

In our most recent issue (Volume 32[3], July), we presented two additional contributions that may be relevant to *APAQ*’s editorial policy. Zitomer and Goodwin (2014) provided for the first time in *APAQ* a comprehensive and systematic survey identifying quality criteria (the what) and strategies (the how) in qualitative inquiry. They formulated six flexible criteria for gauging quality: reflexivity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and coherence. In another article, Piers, an active Canadian National Team wheelchair basketball player in addition to her scholarly career, together with her colleagues (Peers, Spencer-Cavalier, & Lindsay, 2014), *criticized APAQ*’s current person-first language policy and warned about the risk of undermining the ways in which research participants self-identify.

Both author groups proposed reporting guidelines for *APAQ* to follow, and these will be considered in our upcoming board meeting. It is great honor to be involved in a journal where such dynamic and thought-provoking contributions are published, while remaining committed to high-level scholarly quality, thus continuing its 3 decades’ tradition of innovation.

Yeshayahu Hutzler, Editor

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