

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Reporting checklist for methodological, that is, research on research studies is urgently needed



Granholm et al. [1] have written a nice commentary regarding transparent and systematic reporting of meta-epidemiological studies. The authors have responded to the lamentation that editors and reviewers ask authors of methodological studies to fill-out Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) reporting guideline checklist [2].

My line of thinking is that methodological studies (i.e., research on research; meta-research) are not systematic reviews (SRs), and that PRISMA checklist is not suitable for them. Development of the PRISMA checklist was a major milestone for reporting of SRs [3], but it is not a one-size-fits-all solution for various types of reviews with elements of systematicity. PRISMA extension for scoping reviews was developed subsequently [4], and development of PRISMA extension for rapid reviews is underway [5]. Furthermore, the EQUATOR network currently lists development of multiple other extensions of PRISMA checklist [6].

I would disagree with Granholm et al. that methods studies are “essentially a subtype of systematic reviews” because the aim of SRs is to appraise and summarize evidence on a certain topic, and methodological studies have completely different aim—such studies are not synthesizing evidence in included studies, but extracting completely different information, and making conclusions that may help create better designed and better reported studies in the future.

Although SRs and methodological studies may use similar methodological approach in terms of being systematic (i.e., screening literature and extracting data by two independent authors) and transparent (i.e., reporting a PRISMA flow chart of study inclusion, reporting included and excluded studies, with reasons, etc.), they are not the same types of studies. For example, for methodological studies there may be no need to engage in designing and conducting extensive search strategies in myriad information sources to test a hypothesis. In addition, it may be less relevant for such studies to have very recent search date.

However, I fully agree with Granholm et al. that an extension of the PRISMA statement for meta-epidemiological studies or a stand-alone guideline would be welcome to help make methodological studies well reported and reproducible.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2019.04.016>

### Transparent and systematic reporting of meta-epidemiological studies

In a recent letter published in *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* [1], Professor Livia Puljak argues that methodological studies are not systematic reviews, and it is inappropriate for journals and reviewers to request that such studies are reported according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) checklist [2].

Some differences between conventional systematic reviews of healthcare interventions and meta-epidemiological

DOI of original article: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2019.04.016>.

Funding: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' contributions: A.G. contributed to conceptualization and wrote and drafted the original article. C.T.A., A.P., J.H.L., and M.H.M. wrote, reviewed and edited the article.

DOI of original article: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2019.04.014>.

Funding: None.

Conflict of interest: None declared.