








## Editorial policies of Brazilian journals about guidelines

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The *guidelines* or writing guides are protocols structured as a check-list to improve the methodological quality of scientific research by increasing its external validity, in addition to ensuring an improved examination by reviewers, encouraging transparency and minimizing the omission of critical information in the method sections, inadequate reporting of adverse events, and misleading result presentations<sup>1-3</sup>.

In March 2020, instructions to authors of 95 Brazilian biomedical journals found in the Scientific Electronic Library Online collection were evaluated and divided into eight major areas, namely:

- 1) Biomedicine;
- 2) Nursing;
- 3) Physiotherapy;
- 4) Medicine;
- 5) Multidisciplinary;
- 6) Dentistry;
- 7) Collective Health; and
- 8) Others – other major areas that did not present at least five journals in isolation.

The 27 guidelines included herein (AGREE, AMSTAR, ARRIVE, CARE, CASP, CHEERS, CODE, CONSORT, COPE, COREQ, GATHER, MIAME, MOOSE, PAIN, PREPARE, PRISMA, PROCESS, RATS, REMARK, SAGER, SPIRIT, SQUIRE, SRQR, STARD, STROBE, STROCCS, and TREND) in the instructions to authors were evaluated. One point was attributed to each guideline identified in the instructions to authors, and thus the score of a journal varied from zero to 27 points.

The mean score of guidelines per journal was  $1.34 \pm 2.27$  guidelines, with zero being the lowest score and 11 the highest. A total of 56 (58.94%) journals did not discriminate any guidelines in the instructions to authors. This result indicates the need to modify the editorial policies of Brazilian journals. When compared with the world scenario<sup>4-6</sup>, Brazilian journals are similar to other journals, but inferior to high-impact journals, evidencing the importance of requesting these editorial guidelines.

When comparing major areas, nursing and physiotherapy journals presented the best results, and biomedicine, multidisciplinary, and others had the worst results. This fact could be related to how long the journal has been published as journals on the newest major areas presented the worst results. However, there is a need for more studies to confirm this conclusion.

No journal reported even half the protocols evaluated. The five most present guidelines were CONSORT (28–29.47%), PRISMA (26–27.37%), STROBE (15–15.79%), STARD (11–11.58%), and COPE (8–8.42%). Four protocols (AGREE, PREPARE, PROCESS, and STROCCS) were not mentioned by any of the journals. The journals should not describe all the guidelines already developed in their instructions to authors, but they should at least indicate those that are related to their area as well as the main study designs to ensure higher methodological quality and reduce the reviewers' work.

Overall, it is noticeable that Brazilian biomedical scientific journals use a small number of guidelines in their instructions to authors, and the ones that use them favor the oldest and best-known protocols, showing a growth potential for Brazilian biomedical science.

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**RKCT:** Conceptualization. Methodology. Project administration. Supervision. Validation. Writing – review & editing. **ALJCP:** Investigation. Methodology. Writing – original draft. **MESLV:** Data

curation. Investigation. Writing – original draft. **DSN:** Investigation. Writing – original draft. **FCC:** Conceptualization. Data curation. Formal analysis. **DRS:** Conceptualization. Investigation. Methodology. **NPA:** Investigation. Writing – original draft.

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