Comment on "Preventing statistical errors in scientific journals"

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The editor who has taken the time to learn R can do much more than run the package Statcheck, recently described in the February issue of ESE by Michelle B Nujiten.[1] Statcheck is nice but I think is intended for quickly assessing many articles at once for the single problem of an incorrect calculation of the *P* value. At a small medical journal out in the ROW (rest of the world), we've decided to require authors to submit datasets with their manuscripts, so that they can be checked more thoroughly. We hope to give readers greater confidence in data published in the journal. In the first six months we encountered occasional problems, a common one being, simply, missing data. Authors should explain how missing data were addressed, or how they may have affected results.[2] Inspecting the dataset with R to find these problems is not time-consuming or particularly difficult once you have learned basic use of R. R is not as user-friendly as some of the expensive software, but is open source and free, and there are numerous packages that provide additional functionality. (https://www.wikiwand.com/en/R_(programming_language.) So, editors could go much further, learning a little statistics and a program like R to provide statistical support that might not otherwise be readily available.

References

1 Nuijten MB. Preventing statistical errors in scientific journals. *European Science Editing* 2016; 42(1): 8-10.

2 von Elm E, Altman DG, Egger M, Pocock SJ, Gøtzsche PC, Vandenbroucke JP; STROBE Initiative. Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE)statement: guidelines for reporting observational studies. *Bull World Health Organisation.* 2007 Nov;85(11):867-72. PMID: 18038077

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