News notes

Research Organization Registry launch

ROR (ror.community) is a registry of research organisations, defined as "any organization that conducts, produces, manages, or touches research". The initiative has begun assigning unique identifiers (random, unique, and opaque nine-character strings) to the approximately 91,000 organisations in its registry. ROR IDs are stored with additional metadata, such as alternate organisation names or abbreviations, external URLs, and other identifiers, to be interoperable across different systems. ROR is now looking to work with publishers, funders, metadata providers, and research offices to discuss how best to incorporate their IDs into the scholarly communication infrastructure.

Down with dichotomous statistical significance

Tired of seeing unwarranted claims of non-association or overconfident claims in scientific literature, in a Comment published in *Nature*, more than 800 signatories call for an end to the false belief that crossing the threshold of statistical significance shows a result is real (*Nature;* 20 March 2019). The authors state that such 'dichotomania' has led scientists and journal editors to privilege such results. They advocate that we no longer treat p values, confidence intervals, or other statistical measures as categorical, and learn to embrace uncertainty. They suggest statistical significance be retired, and confidence intervals be renamed 'compatibility intervals' and interpreted in a way that avoids overconfidence. The authors also encourage ongoing monitoring of the literature for statistical abuses.

Fact-checking tools

Journals regularly use software to check for plagiarized submissions, and new tools are being developed to check for image manipulation. Now, Retraction Watch (retractionwatch.com) recently reported on tools to automate the process of fact-checking in research papers. One tool compares reported statistical ratios, confidence intervals, and p-values, to see if these numbers are compatible, i.e. could have been calculated from the same data set. This helps to spot calculation and reporting errors, which can slip through peer review. The approach is described in *Bioinformatics* (2018;34:1758). The second tool performs a check of nucleotide sequences that authors submit with their papers to molecular biology journals. The long chains of G, T, A and C letters cannot be checked by human reviewers, but are fairly easily processed with software, which can check for example if the sequence reported really corresponds to the gene studied in the paper. The error rate is currently too large to incorporate these tools into a standard journal workflow, but the authors plan to develop them further (*PLOS One*; 1 March 2019)

Cochrane REWARD prize 2019

Cochrane (cochrane.org), an organisation providing evidence to support decision making in health care, announced the call for nominations for their annual REWARD prizes, acknowledging "initiatives that have potential to reduce research waste". Research waste occurs when results of a study cannot be used in practice, especially in medical practice, and thus the money, time and effort put into the study is wasted. The mistakes leading to waste can be made at each stage of the research process, for example the researchers can choose a wrong question to begin with, or write up the results in a way that makes them incomprehensible. The 2019 call is open until 5 June, and the winners will be announced in October.

ResearchGate collaborates with publishers

In April 2018, ResearchGate (www.researchgate.net) entered into an agreement with three publishers: Springer Nature, Cambridge University Press, and Thieme. The aim is to collaborate on the amicable sharing of articles between platforms. Springer Nature, for example, will begin adding full text articles, published since November 2017 from 26 subscription journals, to the profiles of authors on ResearchGate. This seems to mark a step towards more integration between publishers and scholarly sharing networks.

Duplicate publications

What do journals do when duplicate publications are brought to their attention? Mario Malički and colleagues tracked over five years the fate of more than a thousand of publications which were tagged as "duplicate publications" by MEDLINE in January 2013 (*Biochemica Medica* 2019;29;010201). They found that 35% were labelled incorrectly; the remaining 359 constituted true cases of duplicate publications. Most (56%) of these duplicates can be attributed to journals, usually publishing the same article in two issues of the journal; the rest can be attributed to authors, usually submitting the same study to several journals. Tidying up of the duplications proved to be difficult: after checking the databases, journal pages, and several attempts at contacting editors, at the end of the study the authors found that only half of the cases were clearly labelled as duplications, and only 9% were retracted. COPE (publicationethics.org) recommends retraction of duplicated publications.

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