

Correspondence

Need for & use of guidelines for reporting qualitative research

Sir

The article by Mishra N.N. *et al*¹ touches upon an important area of knowledge and attitudes of mental health research among health care professionals who carry out research in psychiatry. The tools used are two questionnaires; one that assessed the knowledge of informed consent guidelines and the attitudes of researchers toward them, and the second that addressed the knowledge regarding confidentiality protection guidelines and attitudes relevant to their implementation and interpretation. The rate of verbal consent was 62/121 (51.2%), but only one fourth [31/121; 25.6%] eventually completed the study. The source of the questions used in the questionnaire (mentioned only in the abstract) is stated to be prominent guidelines (which are not listed). What is not mentioned in the paper is the validation of both questionnaires; for content, criterion or construct as also assessment of reliability. While criterion validity may not be applicable in the present case in the absence of a “gold standard”, it would have been interesting to know how content and construct were validated. For concepts like informed consent and confidentiality, both these would be important. A study by Boynton and Greenhalgh² has outlined the use of a ten point checklist that could critically appraise whether a questionnaire met all requirements right from the research question and study design to analysis, interpretation and conclusions. Guidelines also exist on the peer review of manuscripts that contain qualitative research such as the RATS guidelines³. Qualitative research involves the reporting of complex phenomena. Similar to the CONSORT guidelines for reporting of quantitative research, the answer likely lies in the use of checklists such as the COREQ (developed for interviews and focus groups) to improve reporting quality and indirectly improved conduct of qualitative research⁴.

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