

Correspondence

Equity in reporting settings of studies

Received: 8 June 2022

Accepted: 9 June 2022

Published: 7 Sep 2022

Competing interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Duleeka Knipe^{1,2} ✉, Rachel Jewkes³

¹Population Health Sciences, Bristol Medical School, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

dee.knipe@bristol.ac.uk

orcid.org/0000-0002-1040-7635

²South Asian Clinical Toxicology Research Collaboration, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

³Gender and Health Research Unit, South African Medical Research Council, Pretoria, South Africa

orcid.org/0000-0002-4330-6267



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0).

Citation

Knipe D, Jewkes R. Equity in reporting settings of studies. *Eur Sci Ed.* 2022;48:e87545. <https://doi.org/10.3897/ese.2022.e87545>

Decolonisation in the academic environment has recently gained considerable attention and contributed to some positive developments, especially in relation to university teaching in high-income countries. However, one area in which change is much needed is in respect of reporting the settings of studies. The practice of labelling the country from which research data originate at best provides vital information to assist our understanding of the context of studies but may otherwise convey a powerful message about locational norms and the construction of the 'other'. Where English-speaking high-income countries are positioned as 'normal' locations for research and the rest of the world is viewed as 'other than normal' and thus in need of mention by name.

In 2021, an invitation to revise and resubmit the manuscript describing a study conducted in Sri Lanka, which was led by Dr Knipe, was received from the *Lancet Psychiatry*. One of the editorial points of the journal was that the country of the study should be included in the title of the manuscript. This had been intentionally omitted in that manuscript to gauge the response of the reviewers and editors. Dr Knipe, whose primary research focus is on LMICs, had noticed that co-

authors had often asked her to put the country in the title when the research was from an LMIC but never when the research was from an English-speaking high-income country (HIC). Dr Knipe wanted to see whether this insistence extended beyond co-authors, and in this case, it was evidenced by the editorial point. A quick audit of recent *Lancet Psychiatry* articles confirmed that the practice was not equitable. We believe that insisting on the country being included in the title is the right thing to do, but the requirement should be the same for all countries from which data originate.

Similarly, in the text of articles, it is very important that all references to individual studies mention the country in which the studies were conducted. It is normative to see 'a study in Zambia ...' but very unusual to read 'a study in the UK...'. However, it is not appropriate to name low-income or non-English speaking settings only. All research is a product of the social and cultural system within which it is created, and therefore, it should be labelled.

We request all editors to adopt equitable reporting and consider including our recommendations into author and editorial guidelines (Box 1).

Box 1 – Recommendations for equitable reporting of studies in human populations

Title:

- In the report title, authors should include the country in which the studies were conducted.

Abstract:

- For systematic review, authors should explicitly state the generalisability of the findings of their reviews if reviews include primarily HIC data.

Background/Discussion:

- When previously conducted studies are reported, authors should highlight the context in which the studies originate.

ease / publications

ese / European Science Editing

European Science Editing is an official publication of EASE. It is an open access peer-reviewed journal that publishes original research, review and commentary on all aspects of scientific, scholarly editing and publishing.

<https://ese.arphahub.com/>

<https://www.ease.org.uk>

https://twitter.com/Eur_Sci_Ed

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/easeeditors/>



© 2022 the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.