

A MESSAGE FROM THE PAST PRESIDENT / UN MESSAGE DE LA PRÉSIDENTE SORTANTE

At a casual dinner in Basel, Switzerland in June of 2019 a group of expert librarians/search methodologists from various countries bemoaned the poor quality of some of the knowledge synthesis (KS) publications they had seen and agreed that it was a profound oversight that librarians were seldom, if ever, included on peer review panels for these publications. They concluded that if more librarians were invited to bring their methodological expertise to the peer review process that the quality of published KS studies might be improved. They noted that this seemed an awfully large oversight on the part of medical journal editors, given that the literature search for KS studies is the data gathering method of these studies, and that weaknesses in the search would undoubtedly result in weaknesses in the study. A few of those librarians at that dinner went on to eventually draft the following letter which was recently sent to the ICMJE.

The recent “Surgisphere scandal” resulting in retractions from both the Lancet and the New England Journal of Medicine makes our letter exceptionally timely given that the editors of these two journals recognized that they did not “ask the right people” to review the research. Engaging “the right people” is an important aspect of the peer review process and librarians are the “right people” to review literature search strategies in published KS studies.

Many thanks to Robin Parker and Sarah Visintini from CHLA/ABSC’s Knowledge Synthesis Interest Group (KSIG) for accepting my invitation to engage other members of the KSIG in writing the first draft of this letter. It was my honour to be the primary shepherdess on this project and I thank all the writers, editors, and signatories for their help, support, and participation. Additional thanks to Gerhard Bissels, member of the European Association for Health Information and Libraries for his support of this project. Without his urging I doubt it would have happened.

We encourage you to share this letter across your networks.

Best regards,

Sandy

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