

Dear Editor,

Your recent publication MacPherson *et al* [1] reports outcomes that are different to those initially registered [2].

There were 3 pre-specified primary outcomes (one score at 3 timepoints). Although data for all 3 timepoints is reported in the paper, it is also incorrectly stated that the 12 months data is the primary pre-specified timepoint, when no such ranking is given in the registry entry. In addition, there were 17 pre-specified secondary outcomes (9 outcomes to be measured at between 1 and 3 timepoints each) of which 6 were reported in the paper; while 11 are not reported anywhere in the publication. In addition, the trial reports various non-prespecified analytic approaches, such as regression models, only declaring some as novel.

Annals of Internal Medicine has endorsed the CONSORT guidelines on best practice in trial reporting [3]. In order to reduce the risk of selective outcome reporting, CONSORT includes a commitment that all pre-specified primary and secondary outcomes should be reported; and that, where new outcomes are reported, it should be made clear that these were added at a later date, with an explanation of when and for what reason.

This letter has been sent as part of the COMPare project [4]. We aim to review all trials published from now in a sample of top journals, including Annals of Internal Medicine. Where outcomes have been incorrectly reported we are writing letters to correct the record, and to audit the extent of this problem, in the hope that this will reduce its prevalence. We are maintaining a website at COMPare-Trials.org where we will be posting the submission date and publication date of this letter, alongside a summary of the data on each trial and journal. We hope that you will publish this letter so that those using the results of this trial to inform decision making are aware of the discrepancies.

Yours faithfully,

Henry Drysdale, Ioan Milosevic and Ben Goldacre on behalf of the COMPare project team.

[1] MacPherson H *et al*, Alexander Technique Lessons or Acupuncture Sessions for Persons With Chronic Neck Pain: A Randomized Trial, *Ann Intern Med*. 2015;163:653-662

[2] Trial registry entry: <http://www.controlled-trials.com/ISRCTN15186354>

[3] Moher D *et al*, CONSORT 2010 Explanation and Elaboration: updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials, *BMJ* 2010; 340:c869.

[4] COMPare project website www.COMPare-Trials.org

