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Letter to the Editor

Enhancing Transparency and Standardization in Infographics and Visual Abstracts in Medical Journals

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To the editor,

In recent years, the use of infographics and visual abstracts in medical journals has increased significantly. These tools are designed to enhance accessibility, improve the visibility of published research, and facilitate knowledge translation in both academic and social media environments. Despite these advantages, emerging evidence suggests that the quality and completeness of information presented in these formats may be insufficient for accurate interpretation of research findings.

Ferreira et al. found that although most journal infographics include basic elements such as study population, intervention, comparator, and outcomes, this information is often not sufficiently detailed to allow proper interpretation without consulting the full article. Moreover, key methodological components such as risk of bias, effect estimates, and conflicts of interest are rarely reported. [1]

Similarly, visual abstracts, which are widely used to accelerate dissemination of research findings, often prioritize visual appeal and brevity. Millar and Lim emphasize that while these tools enhance engagement and dissemination, they should not replace full scientific reporting, as oversimplification may lead to misinterpretation of research results. [2]

From an educational perspective, Spicer and Coleman demonstrated that visual abstracts can effectively communicate the main elements of a study, including the research question, methodology, and key findings, in a concise and accessible format, particularly for busy clinicians and broader audiences. [3] However, the absence of standardized guidelines for their design and reporting remains a significant challenge.

Furthermore, guidance such as the "Twelve tips to make successful medical infographics" highlights the importance of clarity, scientific accuracy, and audience awareness in infographic design, emphasizing that effective visual communication requires a structured approach. [4]

Overall, although infographics and visual abstracts are valuable tools for disseminating medical research, important limitations in their reporting practices remain. Therefore, the development of standardized frameworks is necessary to ensure the consistent inclusion of essential methodological and statistical information.

In this regard, it is recommended that scientific journals not only encourage the use of standardized visual abstracts but also require authors to submit a structured graphical abstract alongside manuscript submission. Such graphical abstracts should include study design, population, intervention, outcomes, effect estimates, limitations, and conflicts of interest. This policy could improve journal quality, enhance transparency, and strengthen the interpretability of published research.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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