

Editorial

Peter D. Sly^{a,*} and David O. Carpenter^a

Changing landscape at *Reviews on Environmental Health*

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We are happy to announce that *Reviews on Environmental Health* has been given an impact factor for the first time, and it is 1.284. This journal has a unique role among environmental health scientific journals, in that we publish reviews rather than original research. We continue to grow in numbers of submitted manuscripts and recognition within the field.

The announcement that *Reviews on Environmental Health* has received an impact factor for 2017 has prompted us to review and update our instructions to authors and submission requirements. In 2016 we published an editorial outlining why we published review articles and what we expected them to contain (1). Our stated purpose was to provide a forum for reviews on a broad range of topics relevant to environmental health. We do continue to receive articles reporting original research. Mostly, these are returned to authors for submission elsewhere. Some of the reviews submitted do not clearly outline their literature search strategies or how papers were chosen for inclusion in the review. This suggests that our current instructions do not clearly reflect what we want to publish.

We have updated our instructions to make clear that we expect authors to follow PRISMA guidelines (2). PRISMA stands for Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses. As stated on their website “PRISMA is an evidence-based minimum set of items for reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses. PRISMA focuses on the reporting of reviews evaluating randomized trials but can also be used as a basis for reporting systematic reviews of other types of research, particularly evaluations of interventions” (3). The website includes a flow chart to show authors how to report the fate of articles identified through search strategies and a checklist to guide authors through how to report their review. Figure 1 shows a theoretical flow chart that should be included in reviews submitted to *Reviews on Environmental Health*.

We do publish narrative reviews. Such reviews have a place in environmental health, especially where evidence and good quality research is scant. However, we need authors to move away from the type of review written from the author’s knowledge base without adequately searching the literature. This is the primary reason for asking authors to follow PRISMA guidelines, to the best

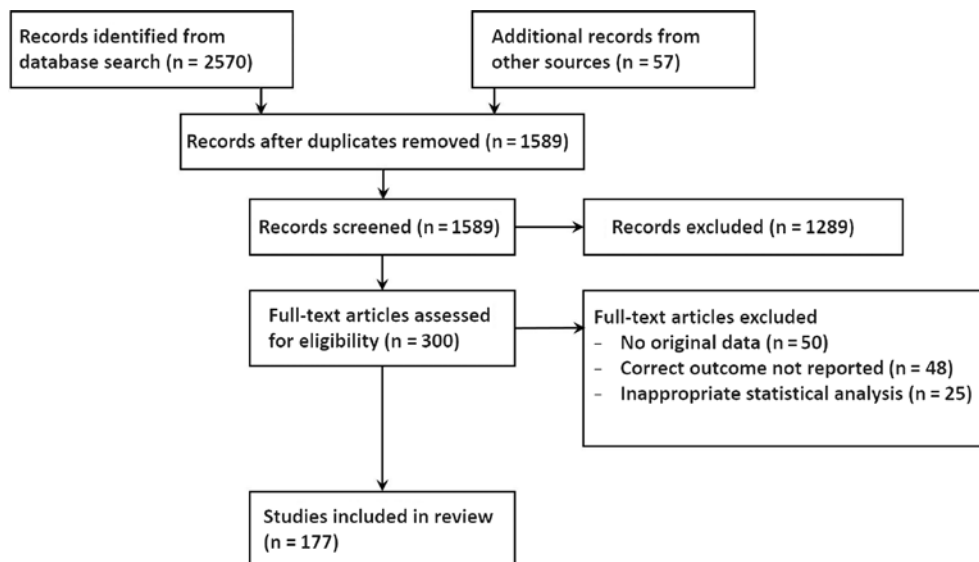


Figure 1: A flow diagram following PRISMA guidelines showing the selection of articles for inclusion in a theoretical review.

of their ability. Authors must include a literature search strategy and a flow chart to show why articles were not included in the review. The review must also start with a clear statement of the question being addressed by the review and must finish with conclusions based on the literature reviewed. The review should synthesize the literature and not simply describe studies. An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the studies reviewed and whether the data presented supported the conclusions is useful. While not appropriate for all reviews, it may be useful to include a table summarizing the main features of the studies reviewed, including: the location and setting of the study; study design; study population and sample size, if appropriate; main findings; strengths and limitations; and an overall assessment of study quality.

The other change we have made to our author instructions is to require a declaration that the research was not funded in any way by entities associated with the tobacco or e-cigarette industry. Why have we taken this stance? The marketing tactics of the tobacco industry are well known and have resulted in essentially all journals, professional societies and universities refusing to accept funds or research funded by tobacco. We published an editorial in 2017 (4) highlighting the potential public health disaster posed by e-cigarettes. Since then reports of adverse health effects associated with vaping are increasing and the utility in aiding smoking cessation is not living up to the initial hype (5–7). We make no apology for placing the

e-cigarette industry in the same category as the broader tobacco industry.

References

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^aEditors in Chief

***Corresponding author: Peter D. Sly**, Children's Health and Environment Program, Child Health Research Centre, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, E-mail: p.sly@uq.edu.au

David O. Carpenter: Institute for Health and the Environment, University at Albany, Albany, NY, USA