AJPM Reviewer Checklists

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Research Manuscript Review Checklist

This checklist may be used when reviewing a Research Article, Research Brief, or Research Letter.

Research Articles are original empirical articles; they make up the majority of journal pages. This includes reports of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs), observational studies, and other basic clinical and public health investigations. A Research Article includes a structured abstract of 250 words or fewer and is limited to 3000 words of text, with two exceptions: Intervention studies may have an abstract of up to 300 words, and RCTs are permitted 4000 words of text.

- All submissions must follow the appropriate reporting guidelines and instructions for reporting statistics.
- RCTs must be identified as such in the article title.
- AJPM requires authors of manuscripts pertaining to clinical trials to register their study in a public trials registry.
- There is a limit of 4 tables/figures for this article type.

Research Briefs are short reports of original empirical articles or evaluations. They include a structured abstract of 250 words or fewer and are limited to 1,200 words of text. There is a limit of 4 tables/figures for this article type, although most submissions do not exceed 2 tables/figures.

Research Letters provide a brief and timely report of outstanding original research (e.g., the result of a pilot study) and should include: introduction, methods, results, and discussion. All research letters considered for publication undergo external peer review. No abstract is required. The letter may include one table or figure. The text is limited to 700 words and the reference limit is 10.

Abstract	
	Is it clear?
	Is the purpose clear?
	Is the methodology clear?
	Does it match the text? Tables? Figures?
	Are the main outcomes evident?
	Do the conclusions align with the purpose?
Introduction	
	Is the purpose clear?
	Does it address an existing challenge in the preventive medicine and population health fields?
	Is the context given adequate?
	Have key concepts and terms been defined?
	Are there sources the authors should be citing?
	If authors claim this is the first study on this topic, can this be verified?
	Is there a potential conflict of interest?
Methods	
	Are the methods clear?
	Is the data set sufficiently described?
	Are participants clearly identified?
	Is the sample size large enough?
	Is selection bias addressed?
	Are the location, date, and duration of the study identified?
	Does the design allow for unexpected outcomes?
	Are the psychometric properties and procedures clearly presented and appropriate?

	Is there enough detail to permit replication?
	Are the number and variety of statistical tests and analyses appropriate and optimal?
	If statistical analysis involves multiple tests or comparisons, was proper adjustment of significance level for chance outcomes applied?
	If the authors have previously published substantial portions of the data, is this acknowledged?
Results	
	Are there flaws in the analysis?
	Are results reported for all analyses described in Methods?
	Is the statistical method appropriate?
	Did you spot any discrepancies? Does the data match that in figures and tables?
	Are results organized in a way that is easy to understand?
Discussion/Conclusion	
	Are the conclusions reported under Discussion appropriate given the Results?
	Are there issues that the authors should address but do not?
	Are there limitations the authors have failed to identify?
	Have counterarguments been considered?
	Does any information here belong in the Introduction instead?
	Is there a clear prevention message?
	Are suggestions for future study and implementation concrete and practical?
References	
	Is the number of references appropriate?
	Do the references reflect the most recent literature?
	Do references consist of mostly primary sources?
	What have the authors failed to cite?
	Are there too many self-citations?

Tables, Figures, and Appendices	
	Are all of the tables, figures, and appendices mentioned in the text included?
	Are the tables and figures necessary? Can they be simplified?
	Does the information in the tables and figures match that in the text?
	Is the data in the tables and figures reported in Results?
Overall	
	Is the paper well organized?
	Is it relevant to the journal's readership?
	Does it add to the existing literature?
	What are the strengths and weaknesses?
	Is the title appropriate?
	Does anything need clarification?
	Are there any ethical concerns (funding sources, potential plagiarism, conflicts of interest, etc.)?
	Is it well-written? (While the reviewer is not expected to provide any line edits, it is perfectly appropriate for a reviewer to indicate the writing needs clarity, proofreading, or assistance from a native English speaker.)

Current Issues Review Checklist

Current Issues papers are brief, scholarly reviews of any current issue or controversy that the author thinks might be of interest to AJPM readers. They should be broadly informative and bold in prompting new thinking. Example topic areas include preventive medicine, public health, social and behavioral health, health disparities, global health, environmental and ecologic issues, and health-related technologies. No abstract is required for Current Issues articles. The text is limited to 2,000 words and the reference limit is 20. There is a limit of 4 tables/figures for this article type, although most submissions do not exceed 2 tables/figures.

Reviewers should consider the following while completing their review of a Current Issues paper:

Overall	
	Is the topic an area of interest to AJPM readers?
	Does the paper address a challenge facing the preventive medicine and public health communities?
	Does it enhance current literature on the topic?
	Is the paper thoughtful, clearly written, and well organized?
	Is there a potential conflict of interest?
	Does it provide the appropriate historical background?
	Are key concepts and terms defined?
	Are counter arguments considered?
	Are the references appropriate and up-to-date? (Please note there is a reference limit of 20.)
	If figures and tables are used, are they necessary? Are they clear?

Systematic Review Checklist

Systematic Review Articles are reviews and meta-analyses that are thorough, critical assessments of the literature and data sources pertaining to clinical topics. Review articles emphasize factors such as cause, diagnosis, prognosis, therapy, and prevention; data sources should be as current as possible. These articles must follow PRISMA reporting guidelines.

Systematic Review Articles include a structured abstract of 250 words or fewer and are limited to 4000 words of text. Per PRISMA guidelines, systematic reviews and meta-analyses must be identified as such in the article title. There is a limit of 4 tables/figures for this article type. Tables summarizing literature used in the systematic review should be included as appendix material.

Reviewers should consider the following while completing their review of a Systematic Review paper:

Overall	
	Does the review address a current challenge in the public health or preventive medicine?
	Is the description of the literature search adequate?
	Is the literature analyzed adequate and appropriate? Does it include the most recent literature?
	Was appropriate study design addressed in the review?
	Do the outcomes reported match those documented in the protocol?
	If the results of the review were combined, are the results of the all included studies clearly displayed? Are the reasons for variations explored?
	Have the authors indicated the statistical approach used?
	Do they provide confidence intervals along with reporting of any point estimates?
	Have they assessed for the presence of publication bias, and, if so, have they reported using a graphical method only (funnel plot) and a statistical test (e.g. Egger test)?
	Can the results be applied to other populations?
	Were all relevant outcomes considered?

Supplement or Theme Manuscript Checklist

AJPM publishes **Supplement and Theme Issues**, which often have a mix of article types, including research, policy, review, and practice-focused papers, as well as summaries of the recent literature. When reviewing a supplement or theme article, it is important to remember it is just one piece of a puzzle. If you feel the article does not stand well on its own, you are welcome to email the Editorial Office at ajpm@umich.edu to request a brief description of the theme or supplement.

Many Supplement and Theme Articles will be either research articles or systematic reviews, in which case the previous checklists should be used. Other manuscripts may be identified as Special Articles, and may be more descriptive in nature.

Reviewers should consider the following while completing their review of a Supplement or Theme special article:

Overall	
	Is the purpose clear? As special articles are often more descriptive in nature, these may describe the "how" and the "why" of a program or process rather than measurable outcomes.
	Does the paper address a special challenge in preventive medicine or public health?
	Are the citations appropriate? Is any relevant literature missing?
	Is the relevant context (social, environmental, cultural, etc.) described adequately?
	Are participants, as appropriate, clearly identified?
	Is the data collection (or program development) appropriately described?
	Have challenges and limitations been addressed?
	Is there enough information to indicate whether the results may be transferrable to another setting?