Endorsing SPIRIT in your journal

0:00
Does your journal publish articles that report randomised trial protocols?

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SPIRIT can help make sure these articles include all the information your readers need.

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In this video, we'll tell you what SPIRIT is,

0:18
why many journals endorse SPIRIT,

0:22
and how to endorse SPIRIT in your journal.

0:26
SPIRIT is a reporting guideline.

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Reporting guidelines are a list of minimum items that a person needs to fully understand a report of research.

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There are lots of reporting guidelines, each for a specific study type.

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SPIRIT is the reporting guideline for reporting the protocol of a randomised controlled trial.

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For other study designs that your journal publishes,

0:57
visit the EQUATOR network for help in finding appropriate reporting guidelines.

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There are two different types of trial protocol that researchers might write:

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an abridged trial protocol to publish in a journal article,

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and the full trial protocol that they might use for ethics or regulatory approval.

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SPIRIT can be used as a guide for both types of trial protocol,

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but in this video we'll focus on protocol articles written specifically to publish in a journal.

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The SPIRIT checklist includes 34 items.

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In the actual checklist, each item is given a line or two of description.

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For example, item 4, Trial Registration, is the name of trial registry, identifying number with URL, and date of registration.

1:58
Or, if the trial is not yet registered, the name of the intended registry.

Why journals endorse SPIRIT

2:04
You might be wondering, why should my journal endorse SPIRIT?

2:10
SPIRIT was created by groups of people who work with clinical trials and their protocols, like healthcare professionals, trialists, statisticians, patients, and funders.

2:24
So when authors use SPIRIT to report their trial protocol, all of these different audiences will be able to find the information they need.

2:35
Other researchers will be able to understand and build on the methods and avoid unnecessary duplication of trials.

2:44
Patients and healthcare professionals will know what clinical questions are being explored, and how.

2:51
And systematic reviewers will know if new evidence is being generated that is relevant to their review question.

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A trial protocol article that follows SPIRIT provides more detail than is usually posted to a trial registry,

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so it is a more complete public record for readers to use.

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Planning a trial means making a lot of decisions about the trial design.

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Using SPIRIT when writing a trial protocol helps make sure researchers think about all the critical trial design issues before the trial starts, and report the decisions that they make.

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Making explicit decisions early in the planning process can help them to design and conduct a more robust trial, which helps to build a stronger clinical evidence base.

3:48
Complete reporting in trial protocols submitted to your journal also means you'll have less back-and-forth with authors, asking for missing information during the peer review process.

4:01
And this means there's less work for your editorial office and for peer reviewers,

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and a smoother, quicker publishing experience for authors.

4:12
SPIRIT doesn't tell authors how to write about each item.

4:17
They can still write in their own voice or your journal's preferred style.

4:23
SPIRIT doesn't limit what authors can write about. It lists the minimum essential information, but authors can include more details.

4:33
It also doesn't tell authors the order that information has to be in.

4:38
Authors can use SPIRIT to write articles for any journal that accepts trial protocol articles.

4:44
They will always be able to follow SPIRIT *and* your journal's instructions.

4:50
Importantly, SPIRIT does not mandate specific methods.

4:56
It does not specify how a trial should be conducted. It just makes sure authors report exactly what they plan to do.

5:05
This lets readers judge whether the methods are likely to produce results that are valid and relevant to them.

How to endorse CONSORT

5:14
How exactly can you endorse SPIRIT?

5:18
You could include text in your journal's Instructions for authors, Asking authors to use SPIRIT when reporting a protocol for our randomised trial.

5:28
You may also want to ask authors to upload a completed copy of the SPIRIT checklist.

5:35
Next to each item they can write which page of the draft that information can be found on.

5:43
On our website you can find suggested wording to include in your journal's Instructions for Authors.

5:51
This includes a link to our website, where authors can find a downloadable, fillable copy of the SPIRIT checklist and additional training and support.

6:03
You could then ask your editorial team or peer reviewers to check the completeness of reporting using SPIRIT as a guide.

6:11
This job is made easier if authors upload a completed checklist.

6:18
You could also write an editorial promoting and explaining your decision to endorse SPIRIT.

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You could also include the SPIRIT checklist and the link to our website in your resources for peer reviewers.

6:31
Our website includes training for reviewers on how to use SPIRIT and the importance of complete reporting.

6:41
You might have heard of SPIRIT's companion checklist, CONSORT. CONSORT helps researchers when they come to write up the results of their randomised trial. You can find out more about CONSORT on our website.

6:55
This is the end of this training video on what SPIRIT is,

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why journals endorse SPIRIT, and how to endorse SPIRIT in your journal.

7:06
The 2025 update of SPIRIT and CONSORT was funded by the MRC NIHR.

7:13
Thank you for endorsing SPIRIT to make sure the trial protocols that your journal publishes contain all the important information that readers need.

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By building a better evidence base today, we're ensuring better quality research in the future.