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New guidelines to report studies of genetic and molecular risk factors more accurate and ethical

Barcelona, 25 October 2011. New guidelines which provide an easy to use checklist for the accurate and ethical reporting of studies involving genetic or molecular risk factors for disease have been proposed by a group of international researchers among them **Miquel Porta, head of the group of Clinical and molecular epidemiology of cancer at [IMIM \(Hospital del Mar Research Institute\)](#)**, and are published in this week's *PLoS Medicine*.

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of studies involving the use of biomarkers, often conducted within the growing number of biobanks and of biomonitoring projects but such studies are difficult to interpret and are sometimes poorly conducted or reported. This type of work is often referred to as molecular epidemiology and such studies typically involve examining the association between biomarkers (risk factors) and disease processes or outcomes. It is often hoped that such studies may be used to clarify disease mechanisms of exposures and diseases, identify individuals at risk for a particular condition, to improve diagnosis, or to predict future clinical outcomes in patients.

The new guidelines are called **STROBE-ME (Strengthening the Reporting of OBservational studies in Epidemiology – Molecular Epidemiology)**. Their authors hope that the guidelines will help to uphold researchers' ethical duties and responsibilities, such as accurately, completely, and transparently reporting findings in sufficient detail to allow the scientific community to assess their strengths and weaknesses, make fair comparisons, and clearly interpret the findings.

The authors say that if used widely and systematically, the **STROBE-ME** checklist should strengthen the reporting of molecular epidemiology studies and the way in which such studies are interpreted.

The STROBE-ME guidelines will be published on the STROBE website (<http://www.strobe-statement.org>) where a forum for discussion and improvement of the checklist and related material will be available. In order to encourage dissemination of these guidelines, the article will also be published on October 25th simultaneously by the following 7 journals: *PLoS Medicine, European Journal of Clinical Investigation, European Journal of Epidemiology, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, Preventive Medicine, and Mutagenesis.*

Link:

<http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1001117>

For further information

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