

A Systematic Review of the Methodological and Reporting Quality of Case Series in Surgery

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Abstract : Introduction: Case Series are an important and common study type. Currently, no guideline exists for reporting case series and there is evidence of key data being missed from such reports. We propose to develop a reporting guideline for case series using a methodologically robust technique. The first step in this process is a systematic review of literature relevant to the reporting deficiencies of case series. Methods: A systematic review of methodological and reporting quality in surgical case series was performed. The electronic search strategy was developed by an information specialist and included MEDLINE, EMBASE, Cochrane Methods Register, Science Citation index and Conference Proceedings Citation index, from the start of indexing until 5th November 2014. Independent screening, eligibility assessments and data extraction was performed. Included articles were analyzed for five areas of deficiency: failure to use standardized definitions missing or selective data transparency or incomplete reporting whether alternate study designs were considered. Results: The database searching identified 2,205 records. Through the process of screening and eligibility assessments, 92 articles met inclusion criteria. Frequency of methodological and reporting issues identified was a failure to use standardized definitions (57%), missing or selective data (66%), transparency, or incomplete reporting (70%), whether alternate study designs were considered (11%) and other issues (52%). Conclusion: The methodological and reporting quality of surgical case series needs improvement. Our data shows that clear evidence-based guidelines for the conduct and reporting of a case series may be useful to those planning or conducting them.

Keywords : case series, reporting quality, surgery, systematic review

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