Title:
PRECHECK: A checklist to evaluate COVID-19 preprints

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Abstract:
Preprints are by definition publicly available and can therefore be read by anyone. Since they did not (yet) pass peer-review they may be of lower quality, risking the spread of misinformation. For example, during the COVID-19 global health crisis the number of related preprints spiked, counting more than 34,000 as of May 7, 2021. Some of these preprints suffer indeed from substantial shortcomings such as poor methodology, poor reporting and unjustified conclusions.

To help non-experts navigate Covid-19 preprints with a critical mind, we have created PRECHECK: a checklist to help assess the quality of Covid-19-related preprints in psychology and medicine. The checklist contains six items, e.g., on design, transparency and limitations. Each item consists of several easy to answer questions. The goal, however, is not to calculate a score, rather it is for each user to judge how credible a preprint is for them, guided by their answers on the checklist.

As a first deployment we will test the checklist with undergraduate students in psychology and medicine, and university press officers at both our institutions. The refined checklist will be publicly available, future targeted deployments are possible. Current information can be found on
https://www.precheck.site/

References:
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Bramstedt KA. The carnage of substandard research during the COVID-19 pandemic: a call for quality. J Med Ethics. 2020. doi:10.1136/medethics-2020-106494