

Editorial Concern—Possible Reporting of the Same Patients With COVID-19 in Different Reports

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Since January 1, 2020, *JAMA* and the *JAMA* Network journals have received hundreds of manuscripts and direct queries related to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), including research reports, case series and case reports, and opinion pieces. The editors have become aware that some of the patients described in some of these manuscripts, sometimes with overlapping authorship, have been reported in more than 1 submission. This inclusion of the same patients in more than 1 report has not been clearly indicated in the submitted manuscripts. This is of concern and may represent a lapse in ethical standards of scientific reporting.¹

Reporting of the same patients in different articles (without clear indication of the duplicate reporting) creates an inaccurate scientific record, may affect the accuracy of subsequent estimates of prevalence of the disease or outcomes, and may preclude valid meta-analyses, unless authors of the

meta-analyses are able to obtain individual patient data to ensure that patients are not being counted more than once in any publication.

The potential for harm that could accrue from this type of misleading reporting is particularly concerning for studies of COVID-19. They are related to a rapidly evolving pandemic with only limited information available for decision-making, so that inaccurate data and analyses not only affect understanding the disease and its epidemiology, but have the potential to result in inappropriate changes in clinical care, ineffective public health responses, exacerbations of the economic consequences from this epidemic, and increasing anxiety about the pandemic.

We recognize the important efforts of authors in rapidly communicating information about COVID-19 to the clinical and scientific community. However, we urge all authors of reports related to COVID-19 to clearly identify if any patients in any submitted manuscript have been reported in any previous submissions or publications.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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