Sports Medicine (2020) 50:449–459
https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-019-01227-1

POSITION STATEMENT

Moving Sport and Exercise Science Forward: A Call for the Adoption of More Transparent Research Practices

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Published online: 4 February 2020
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Abstract

The primary means of disseminating sport and exercise science research is currently through journal articles. However, not all studies, especially those with null findings, make it to formal publication. This publication bias towards positive findings may contribute to questionable research practices. Preregistration is a solution to prevent the publication of distorted evidence resulting from this system. This process asks authors to register their hypotheses and methods before data collection on a publicly available repository or by submitting a Registered Report. In the Registered Report format, authors submit a stage 1 manuscript to a participating journal that includes an introduction, methods, and any pilot data indicating the exploratory or confirmatory nature of the study. After a stage 1 peer review, the manuscript can then be offered in-principle acceptance, rejected, or sent back for revisions to improve the quality of the study. If accepted, the project is guaranteed publication, assuming the authors follow the data collection and analysis protocol. After data collection, authors re-submit a stage 2 manuscript that includes the results and discussion, and the study is evaluated on clarity and conformity with the planned analysis. In its final form, Registered Reports appear almost identical to a typical publication, but give readers confidence that the hypotheses and main analyses are less susceptible to bias from questionable research practices. From this perspective, we argue that inclusion of Registered Reports by researchers and journals will improve the transparency, replicability, and trust in sport and exercise science research. The preprint version of this work is available on SportRχiv: https://osf.io/preprints/sportrxiv/fxe7a/.

The members of the "Consortium for Transparency in Exercise Science" (COTES) are listed as 'Collaborators' at the end of this article.

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Key Points

Questionable research practices have the potential to bias the sport and exercise science literature.

We propose three initiatives to improve transparency and attenuate bias in sport and exercise science: reclassifying research as exploratory or confirmatory, preregistering studies, and the adoption of Registered Reports.

We advocate for the adoption of Registered Reports across sport and exercise science journals.

1 Introduction

Reproducibility and replicability are defining features of science [1]. Many researchers publish studies that fail to meet the criteria of reproducibility ("the ability of a researcher to duplicate the results of a prior study using the same materials as were used by the original investigator" [2]) and replicability ("the ability of a researcher to duplicate the results of a prior study if the same procedures are followed but new data are collected" [2]) [3–5]. This may be due, in part, to the widespread adoption of questionable research practices (QRPs) [6, 7], which represent a major obstacle for reducing uncertainty in scientific research. QRPs can take various forms, such as the post hoc manipulation of hypotheses after the results are known (i.e., HARKing), manipulating analyses to meet the conventional alpha level (i.e., *p*-hacking), selectively discarding non-significant results (i.e., cherry picking), only publishing 'statistically significant' findings (i.e., the file drawer problem), conducting underpowered research, selective outcome reporting, or fraudulently fabricating data [8, 9]. Current evidence suggests that while QRPs are widespread, they may not represent the majority of research [6, 10]. For instance, about 2% of social scientists admitted to fabricating, falsifying, or modifying data or results, and approximately one-third have admitted to employing other questionable research practices [11]. In nutrition, a field adjacent to sport and exercise science, recent investigations of questionable research practices have led to the retraction of numerous high-profile research articles [12].

Although the prevalence of such QRPs is yet to be established within sport and exercise science, given the interdisciplinary nature of this field and the direct overlaps with both the psychological and biomedical sciences, there is little reason to believe that this field is immune to these issues [13, 14]. For example, the very public mistakes found within the "Pacing, graded Activity, and Cognitive behaviour therapy; a randomised Evaluation" (PACE) [15] trial are likely the result of QRPs and undisclosed analytical flexibility [16]. Sampling and statistical analyses within sport and exercise science are typically underpowered and produce biased effect sizes [17]. We suggest there is an urgent need for improved scientific practice and transparency within sport and exercise science to avoid attempts to build upon a fragile scientific foundation. Here, we outline how several QRPs infect scientific practices and suggest a few potential cures for sport and exercise science. This article focuses primarily upon sport and exercise science, which is synonymous with kinesiology though it is likely that our discussion here will relate to fields like athletic training, ergonomics, rehabilitation, and sports and exercise medicine.

2 Common Questionable Research Practices

2.1 HARKing

The prevalence of HARKing in sport and exercise science is unknown, but other fields estimate upwards of 30% of researchers engage in the practice [7]. HARKing does not include studies that are exploratory in nature and designed to define problems rather than provide definite solutions. Instead, HARKing specifically, refers to published research that give the perception that the results were predicted by the researchers a priori. In confirmatory research, hypotheses and research questions should be clear from the outset of the experiment. As Bishop [18] previously stated, confirmatory or hypothesis-driven work in sport and exercise science should be based on a strong theoretical foundation that began with exploratory or "descriptive" studies that define a problem. However, too often hypotheses and research questions are unspecified prior to data collection and analysis, occasionally formulated to fit the observed data, and subsequently reported without indication of post hoc conceptualization. Kerr [19] referred to this as "hypothesizing after the results are known," or simply HARKing. Whilst problematic, HARKing may result from hindsight bias or a poor understanding of scientific research practices, rather than from intentional deception [19]. This practice distorts scientific understanding by creating the perception that a study's results were more certain—or predictable—than they were in reality [20]. While researchers should be open to serendipitous findings, they should be careful to avoid overinterpreting statistical noise [21, 22].

2.2 *p*-Hacking and Data Dredging

Even the most rigorous researchers can overinterpret data due to the ease of modern data analysis [23] increasing the

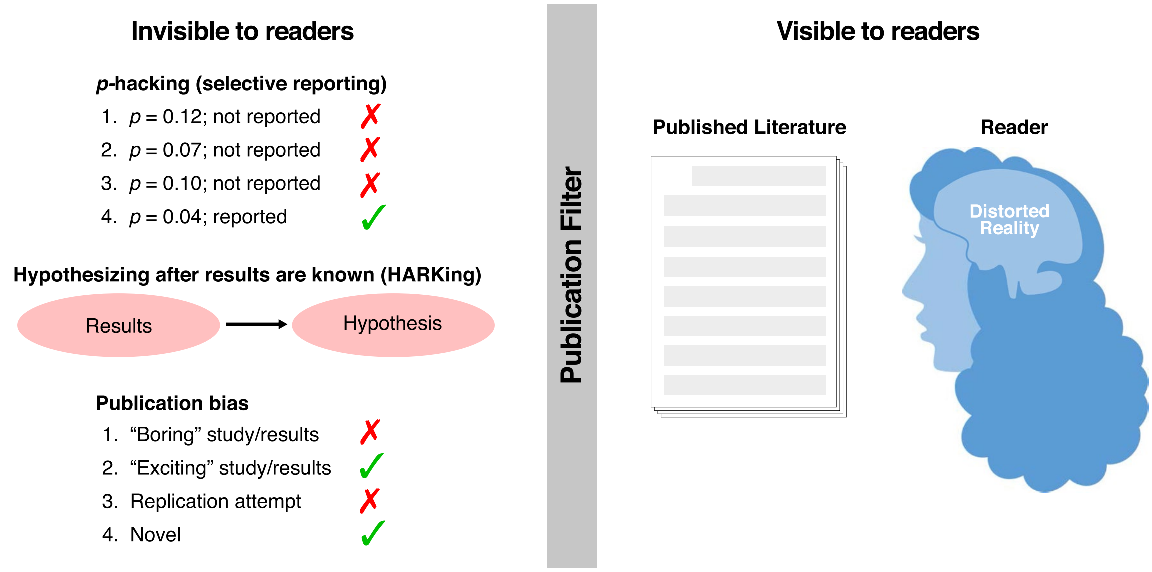

Fig. 1 Researchers' distorted view of reality. Researchers carry out numerous studies and perform many statistical tests, but not all of them are reported or published. Moreover, those results that are reported are not necessarily hypothesized a priori. These biases act as a filter, which distorts the findings presented in the published literature, providing readers (researchers) with a distorted view of reality

risk of apophenia—the tendency to see patterns in random data [24]. For a single dataset, there may be hundreds or thousands of analysis options [25–27], which creates a "garden of forking paths" [28–30], and thus enables the overinterpretation of data. For instance, the average sport and exercise scientist can easily open point-and-click software and produce dozens of analyses of the same data within minutes (e.g., by adding or removing covariates, considering various means of operationalizing an outcome measure, or adding or removing sub-populations).

When the analysis plan has not been registered in advance, researchers may attempt multiple statistical analyses or data transformations, but only report the analyses which best fits their biases or hypotheses. It is likely that many exercise scientists (particularly early career scientists) are unaware that this is poor practice, and may be encouraged to engage in such practices under the guidance of equally naïve senior colleagues [31]. Analytical flexibility may entice "*p*-hacking," or the re-analysis of data until a "statistically significant" *p*-value is observed when no effect truly exists [32–34]. With a multitude of analysis options, researchers can easily find a desirable, likely significant result, and this analytic flexibility occurs unbeknownst to the reader. With the alpha level fixed at 5% and a multitude of analysis options, a statistically significant result can almost always be found if nothing is planned to correct for the multiplicity of tests or the optional cessation of data collection [35, 36]. As an example from sport and exercise physiology, the post hoc separation of participants into "responders" and "non-responders" may produce significant but statistically meaningless results [37].

2.3 Cherry Picking and the File Drawer Problem

There is good evidence that the scientific literature in most fields is biased toward reporting statistically significant results. We believe this has created a distorted view of reality (Fig. 1) [38]. This, in part, is caused by publication bias or a "file drawer problem," where negative results from original studies and meta-analyses are less likely to be published than those reporting statistically significant results [5, 22]. Moreover, publication bias extends to situations in which positive or novel results are more likely to be published than those that make incremental advancements in knowledge. Although there now exists a number of journals that publish negative results and help reduce the prevalence of publication bias (e.g., *Journal of Articles in the Support of the Null Hypothesis*, *Negative Results: Scientific Journal*), these journals are not popular among sport and exercise scientists. It is doubtful that sport and exercise science researchers will readily invest time to write manuscripts to submit to these less prestigious outlets. Such biases have likely contributed to the current replication crisis by inflating the rate of false positives in the scientific literature [22]. In addition to false positives, more extreme observations or larger effect sizes are more often published because small studies have to report a large effect size to reach statistical significance thresholds [39, 40]. Similar to HARKing, it is hard to quantify the prevalence of cherry picking or the file drawer problem within sport and exercise science. In the only investigation of its kind, Earnest et al. [41] found that only 14% (of 236 articles examined) of sports nutrition research reported a primary outcome. This indicates a large amount of room for reporting flexibility within sport and exercise science. Overall, the current publication system favors and incentivizes a number of practices that distort reality by preferentially selecting likely false or misleading effects.

3 Solutions

3.1 Reclassifying the Types of Research

We support a general publishing framework which classifies all empirical research (including meta-analyses and systematic reviews) as either exploratory or confirmatory. Exploratory research is theoretically defined as research where the goal is to gain familiarity with a phenomenon and develop hypotheses [42]. Confirmatory research theoretically occur when a specific research question is being asked based on theory and a predefined statistical hypothesis is tested or in the case of replication. In the practice of publishing, we propose that the practical difference between exploratory and confirmatory analyses is made transparent through study preregistration. Exploratory analyses are subject to greater researcher degrees of freedom [43] and, while there is a great potential for highly innovative findings, there is also a higher risk that the results will not be reproducible or will reproduce with a far smaller effect size [44]. Ideally, confirmatory research would have to be registered in advance of data collection on a publicly available medium. This approach would minimise changes to the original hypotheses and statistical plans after observing the data or, in the rare case that deviations to the analysis plan are necessary, the process ensures these deviations are transparently reported and justified [21]. To date, there are a variety of ways to register a study protocol. First, researchers can utilize preregistration by posting falsifiable hypotheses and specific analysis plan commitments to independent registries; for example, those operated by the National Institute of Health (ClinicalTrials.gov), private publishers such as BMC (ISRCTN registry), or by the nonprofit Center for Open Science (Open Science Framework). These registries can then independently preserve the committed analysis plan and archive these plans for use in the future. Second, a new format of publication has also been created in academic journals to allow researchers to register their study. While some journals support the publication of the protocol only as a complete paper, other journals also now offer a new format, called "Registered Reports," which includes the registration of the study protocol as a first step of the reviewing process before publishing the completed study with its results. After detailing these different options, we explain why we believe Registered Reports are an appropriate solution to promote rigorous and less biased confirmatory research and elevate scientific standards in sport and exercise science.

3.2 Preregistration

Preregistration allows the reader to distinguish between which discoveries or findings were predicted or hypothesized (confirmatory), and which were made after the fact (exploratory). This will ensure that confirmatory findings were indeed hypothesis driven from the outset of the experiment, and thus are more robust than the uncertainty of post hoc or exploratory analyses. Preregistration in no way precludes authors from performing and presenting exploratory analyses, but it does require authors to label them as such. Indeed, by making the distinction between confirmatory and exploratory work more clear, preregistration is likely to encourage unplanned discoveries, as was found when seven Registered Reports were conducted on a controversial finding in social psychology [45]. As Jonas et al. [45] stated in their review of power poses, "...a strong contribution of preregistration is evident in the exploratory analyses conducted across the different studies. Most of the studies did reveal some effects of power poses on [several psychological outcomes in] non-preregistered, exploratory analyses. The preregistration format, rather than inhibiting scientific discovery or exploration, actually then points researchers to the next direction for their research, while at the same time making it clear to the reader that such obtained effects were exploratory and not confirmatory." As an indicator of preregistration efficacy, compared to the original studies, preregistered replications often find smaller and non-statistically significant effects [46–48].

While preregistration can improve the quality and transparency with which science is conducted, it is not without its shortcomings. First, preregistration does not prevent researchers from making theoretically or biologically implausible hypotheses or predictions. For example, there is no mechanism in place to prevent an ardent astrologer from predicting that zodiac signs influence athletic performance [49]. No matter where they are hosted, preregistrations are not typically reviewed by peers prior to data collection and analysis, possibly harming the quality of the final publication [50]. Second, while the researcher declares their beliefs or hypotheses when using preregistration, there is no assurance that reviewers will agree with the preregistered approach. Peer reviewers are also likely to be influenced by their preexisting beliefs which can bias their review [51]; for example, the data itself may influence a reviewer's decision rather the quality of the methods. Therefore, a researcher may not feel motivated to do the additional work to preregister a study when there is no mechanism to prevent such hindsight bias in reviewers and editors [48].

3.3 Registered Reports

A new publication format, Registered Reports, addresses many of the shortcomings of the traditional publication process, in addition to preregistration alone. At the most basic level, Registered Reports function similarly to the traditional publishing process, except that Registered Reports are reviewed in two stages: once before data collection, and again after results are known and discussed. The initial submission includes an introduction and a methods section that reviewers can critique and provide suggestions for prior to the start of data collection. Following a successful "stage 1" peer review,[1] the article is given an "in-principle acceptance" (IPA). The authors can then proceed to collect data that adhere to their IPA plan. When data collection and analyses are completed, and a discussion is written, the authors then submit a finalized manuscript, at which point "stage 2" peer review occurs. In this stage, the reviewers and editors evaluate the entire manuscript. The primary aims of the stage 2 review are to determine adherence to the IPA plan and evaluate the presentation and interpretation of the results, ensuring that the manuscript complies with reporting standards [52]. This review process aims to ensure that the experimental design, methods, and statistical analysis are appropriate for the proposed study. Furthermore, publication occurs regardless of the results of the study (i.e., reduces publication bias). An outline of the Registered Reports process can be found in Fig. 2.

3.4 How do Registered Reports Differ from Preregistration?

Registered Reports are more formal and undergo peer review before the experiment is carried out. Furthermore, Registered Reports provide authors peace of mind that publication is not dependent on results, and the Registered Reports system cannot be "cheated" in the same way that preregistration can. For example, it is possible to preregister multiple analytic plans for a single experiment under separate preregistrations, then only report the results from the most favorable preregistration.

Registered Reports are a natural and logical extension of the preregistration process. This process allows researchers to pursue questions and hypotheses regardless of the outcome, and publication in a relevant journal regardless of the novelty or "statistical significance" of the results. Reviewers and editors can have peace of mind that the methods and rationale are sound before they see the data. In the domain of sport medicine, a study indicated that less than 60% of the registered clinical trials resulted in publication [53, 54], and many studies do not disclose changes to the data collection or analysis plans [54, 55]. Registered Reports avoid this problem; the stage 1 review and IPA process lock authors into a set of hypotheses and procedures. Finally, if the authors were to withdraw their IPA, then the journal could publish a withdrawal notice, which in concept is similar to an article retraction notice [56].

Registered Reports help avoid some of the problems of the current published literature, including publication bias, hindsight bias, and undisclosed statistical analysis flexibility [21, 57, 58]. The current publication system often tempts authors to perform questionable research practices for several reasons. There is strong empirical evidence from other fields (e.g., psychology) that, under the current publication system, authors will often pick analyses, and change hypotheses, to create a more publishable narrative [7, 59]. Registered Reports can avoid this pitfall via the stage 1 review process. Authors will have to adhere to sound methodological and analysis plans they agreed upon in stage 1 which prevents hypotheses switching, hacking analyses for significance, and selective reporting of outcomes or analyses.

3.5 Possible Barriers, Gaps, or Problems

Registered Reports are a relatively new phenomenon with the earliest journals adopting the practice in 2013 [60]. There is, however, emerging evidence regarding Registered Reports' efficacy [56]. Over 100 journals have adopted the practice (see cos.io/rr), with psychology and medical journals among the most prevalent adopters [56]. Unfortunately, sport and exercise science journals are still underrepresented on this list, which presents a major difficulty for sport and exercise science researchers who would like to adopt this practice.

The primary cause for concern in Registered Reports is a lack of transparency [56]. In most cases, the IPA is publicly available following final publication of the Registered Report, so readers can view the original data collection, analysis plans, and potentially pilot data. It is also very encouraging to see that, at the time of publication of this manuscript, there have been no reports of author withdrawal following the IPA. Specifically, Hardwicke and Ioannidis [56] expressed concerns regarding (1) a lack of consistency in policies between journals and (2) a lack of transparency regarding the IPA. These problems should easily be solved with time, as journal editors determine the best policies for their respective fields and determine an appropriate way to catalog the initial IPA. Moreover, there are now outlets that assist journals by providing centralized quality control for Registered Reports (e.g., Open Science Framework, osf.io/rr/) [56].

[1] The reviewers find that the research question makes some meaningful contribution to the field and that the proposed methods are sound.

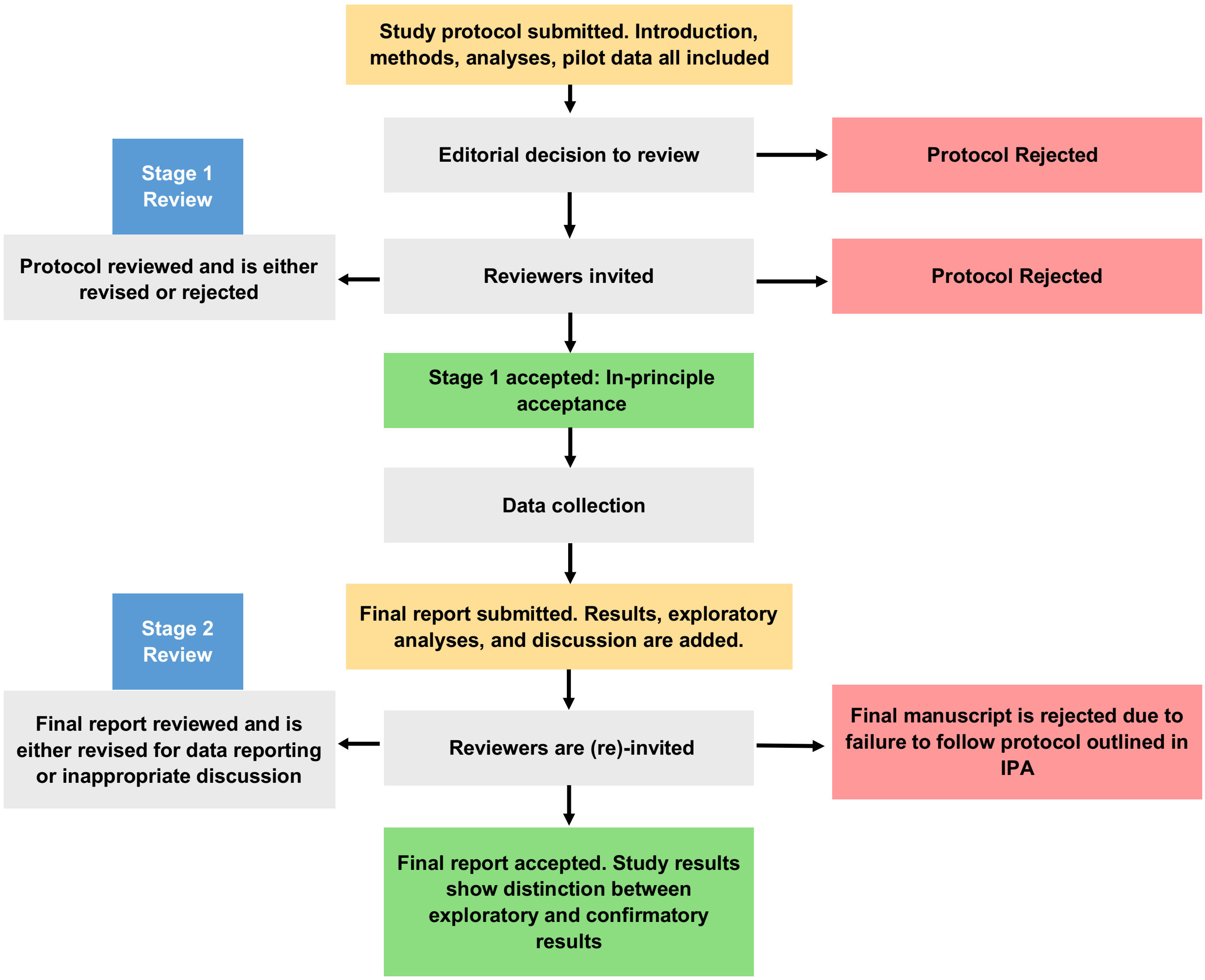

Fig. 2 The Registered Reports process. Before starting data collection, the authors submit the study rationale and methods for peer review (stage 1). After the study is scrutinized by the editor and reviewers, it will either be rejected or receive an in-principle acceptance (IPA). If the study receives an IPA, the authors may proceed to data collection. Once the authors complete the study, they are to analyze and interpret the data in accordance with the Registered Report that was accepted in stage 1. The authors then resubmit the completed study for stage 2 review, which is accepted under the condition that the results are interpreted reasonably, the study was completed in accordance with the methods proposed in stage 1, and any deviations from the original methods are thoroughly explained. Yellow = submission by the authors; red = rejection; green = acceptance

Scientists may worry that this new publication format will raise the bar or move the goalposts for what is necessary to produce publishable science. However, neither Registered Reports nor preregistration are meant to replace current publishing practices.[2] Instead, Registered Reports complement the current publishing system by providing a new path to publication. Further, Registered Reports do not diminish the importance of exploratory research, but rather, allow the reader to understand and separate what is exploratory versus what is confirmatory. In fact, it is entirely possible to include post hoc analyses in Registered Reports, but the authors will have to distinguish this from other results by creating an "Exploratory Analyses" section. In other words, Registered Reports encourage transparent science without affecting traditional publication routes or the ability to include exploratory analyses.

Authors and granting agencies may be concerned that Registered Reports place more weight on reviewer feedback, which could be problematic if authors submit a Registered

[2] While Registered Reports are not meant to replace the current publishing approach, this would be partly appreciated. Such a transition would make the literature homogeneously more rigorous and transparent, properties that are at the heart of good science. This transition would ultimately allow readers of both original studies and meta-analyses to know that the findings have much less bias than they would in a traditional publishing format.

Report that is part of a grant that has already been approved by reviewers. In such cases, Registered Reports reviewers and the editor should be mindful of the limited flexibility that may exist in the protocol, knowing that the study has already been scrutinized by peer reviewers. If authors and granting agencies do not wish to have the protocol altered, we stress that Registered Reports need not replace standard peer review, and authors are free to preregister their study and submit a standard manuscript. To this end, authors must weigh the pros and cons of each avenue and make a decision based on timelines and granting agency guidelines.

Opposition to Registered Reports may also come from both authors and editorial boards worried about the time commitment involved, considering there are two (rather than one) stages of peer review. Authors may be concerned about the increased time committed to amending ethics documents to appease reviewers suggested changes to the protocol. Further, editors and reviewers may require changes to the methods that conflict with those outlined in an already-awarded grant. In cases where an agreement between the authors and the reviewers cannot be reached, a Registered Report may not be possible. Finally, it is up to the editor to decide if the required revisions to the protocol are feasible.

The stage 1 review process reportedly takes 9 weeks on average to reach the first decision (cos.io/rr). However, the stage 2 review process is undoubtedly considerably faster than the typical handling of a final manuscript. First, the reviewers are already identified and have agreed to review the stage 2 submission. Second, the reviewers have already agreed upon the study rationale, methodology, and analysis plan. Traditionally, it is not uncommon for manuscripts to be submitted for review to multiple journals prior to an eventual acceptance—a process which often takes months. Registered Reports can help alleviate two major publication problems that lead to systematic rejection and increased reviewer workload: (1) methodological shortcomings and (2) low perceived contribution and/or novelty of the study results. Indeed, the stage 1 review helps prevent methodologically flawed research from being performed in the first place, by allowing reviewers to comment on the methods and design prior to data collection. The IPA policy reassures authors that they are evaluated based on the importance of their research questions and the quality of their study design, not on the perceived novelty or originality of the results.

Notwithstanding the inherent limitations of Registered Reports—or, indeed, any publishing format—we believe the benefits far outweigh the challenges. The process of Registered Reports is slower than the traditional publication pathways and may reduce the number of publications an author is able to produce. However, as the late Doug Altman warned, "We need less research, better research, and research done for the right reasons" [61]. To this end, Registered Reports may be worth the extra time for increased transparency, scrutiny, and potentially replicability [48]. For those with further concerns, we direct the interested reader to recent survey work [62] and the editorial by Chambers [63].

4 Example Vignette for Comparing Publication Models

To help illustrate the benefits of Registered Reports, in addition to what it may look like in our field, we will draw a hypothetical scenario that researchers may find familiar. Let us assume a hypothetical research group is interested in the effects of a supplement on muscular strength based on previous research. To answer this question, the hypothetical research group decides to measure several variables (e.g., handgrip strength, isokinetic knee extension and flexion strength, leg press strength, and bench press strength) in an arbitrary sample of 20 "recreationally active young adults," randomly assigned to two groups (supplement or control). Researchers train both control and supplementation groups over a period of 8 weeks. The pre- and post-intervention data are collected and analyzed; most of the results are negative, and the data are more variable than expected. Therefore, the principal investigator suggests log transforming the data, dropping the handgrip strength and isokinetic data due to its low practical importance to weight lifters, and excluding three participants with less than 2 years of training prior to the start of the study. The final results indicate a statistically significantly greater improvement in the experimental group for bench press but not leg press. The research group then theorizes in the final manuscript that (a) the study was underpowered to detect a difference in leg press given the variability of the effect, (b) the results were "trending towards significance" [64, 65], and more time would be needed to detect a difference in leg press strength, assuming a positive effect of the supplement, or (c) the supplement only has a positive effect on bench press strength in these participants. In reality, it is highly plausible that the observed effects of the supplement are spurious, and that the post hoc data analysis and accompanying narrative are dubious, speculative, and intellectually dishonest.

Instead, let us suppose the hypothetical research group decides to use the Registered Reports system. First, the stage 1 review would identify the analyses as exploratory or confirmatory; in this case, the analyses are intended to be confirmatory. This stage would also flag the problems regarding the measurement of numerous, likely correlated dependent variables collected in the study, assumptions regarding the practical importance of observed changes, sample size justification (e.g., a priori power analysis), and the participant inclusion/exclusion criteria. In particular, stage 1 review would reveal the degrees of freedom in the data analysis plan. For example, reviewers would likely require the authors to detail the criteria for data analysis, including the application of specific statistical tests, thereby limiting the number of "forking paths" [28]. At the very least, the research group would have to report all of the results from the initial analyses. Reporting additional outcomes as exploratory analyses—involving exclusion of certain participants—or descriptive statistics could then be presented as additional information with sufficient justification. The final manuscript would be both more reliable and transparent to the reader due to the stage 1 review, and the full representation of the results since the authors were required to report all the results and originally planned analyses. Registered Reports can improve the quality of sport and exercise science research by limiting analytic flexibility, improving methodological quality, and ensuring honest analyses and transparent reporting.

5 Conclusion

The categorization of analyses into exploratory and confirmatory facilitates the publication of all types of research while highlighting their respective strengths and weaknesses. Complementarily, Registered Reports are a critical tool for moving sport and exercise science into more transparent scientific practices. This new publication format is not a catch-all solution to problematic scientific practices,[3] but, as highlighted above (see vignette), it does provide a new incentive structure that will help to minimize issues in this regard. For those who are unable or not interested in submitting a Registered Report, we highly recommend utilizing the existing resources for preregistration such as the Open Science Framework (osf.io) or AsPredicted (AsPredicted.org). Those interested in adopting Registered Reports are highly encouraged to read more at the Center for Open Science (cos.io/rr/), and contact the editors of journals in which they would like to publish Registered Reports. Editors may be resistant to adopting a new publication format, and it is unlikely that every journal will need to use or offer Registered Reports as an avenue to publication. However, a number of researchers now endorse and will utilize the Registered Reports if sport and exercise science journals were to adopt such a format.

Acknowledgements This paper is dedicated to the memory of our co-author Rémi Radel, who unfortunately passed away before this paper reached final publication. Without his dedication, support, and insight, this manuscript would not have been possible. Furthermore, we would like to thank Dr. Matthew Cramer, who provided feedback early on in the writing of this manuscript. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions: Ian Boardley (School of Sport, Exercise, & Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, USA), Brooke Bouza (Department of Health, Human Performance, and Recreation, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, Fayetteville, AR, USA), Boris Cheval (Department of Psychology, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland), Zad Rafi Chow (Department of Population Health, NYU Langone Medical Center, New York, NY, USA), Bret Contreras (Sport Performance Research Institute, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, NZ), Brad Dieter (Washington State University, Pullman, WA, USA; Providence Medical Research Center, Providence Health Care, Spokane, WA, USA), Israel Halperin (School of Public Health, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel; Sylvan Adams Sports Institute, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel), Cody Haun (Department of Exercise Science, LaGrange College, LaGrange, GA, USA), Duane Knudson (Department of Health and Human Performance, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, USA), Johan Lahti (Laboratoire LAMHESS, Universite Côte d'Azur, Nice, France), Keith Lohse (Department of Health, Kinesiology, & Recreation; Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training; University of Utah, 250 S 1850 E, Room 258, Salt lake City, Utah, 84112), Matthew Miller (School of Kinesiology and Center for Neuroscience, Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA), Jean-Benoit Morin (Laboratoire LAMHESS, Universite Côte d'Azur, Nice, France), Mitchell Naughton (University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia), Jason Neva (Department of Physical Therapy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada), Greg Nuckols (Sport and Exercise Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA), David Nunan (Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, University of Oxford, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Science, Woodstock Road, Oxford), Sue Peters (Department of Physical Therapy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada), Brandon Roberts (Department of Cell, Developmental and Integrative Biology, University of Birmingham at Alabama, Birmingham, AL, USA), Megan Rosa-Caldwell (Exercise Science Research Center, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, Fayetteville, AR, USA), Julia Schmidt (Department of Physical Therapy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Department of Occupational Therapy, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia), Brad J. Schoenfeld (Health Sciences Department, CUNY Lehman College, Bronx, NY, USA), Richard Severin (Department of Physical Therapy, The University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA; Doctor of Physical Therapy Program, Baylor University, Waco, TX, USA), Jakob Škarabot (Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK), James Steele (ukactive Research Institute, London, UK; School of Sport, Health, and Social Sciences, Solent University, Southampton, UK), Rosie Twomey (Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada), and Zachary Zenko (Department of Kinesiology, California State University Bakersfield, Bakersfield, CA, USA).

Author Contributions ARC and ADV devised and lead the writing of this manuscript. The co-authors participated in the brainstorming, drafting and editing, or supported the initiatives included within the manuscript. Author order—except for ARC and ADV—was determined via randomization, as per majority vote. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has four requirements for authorship that pertain to this manuscript, which will be used to acknowledge individual contributions: (1) substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; and (2) drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and (3) final approval of the version to be published; and (4) agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the

[3] Registered Reports are only one step in a long process for improving sport and exercise science research. In fact, from the email thread used during the creation of this paper, the Society for Transparency, Openness, and Reproducibility in Kinesiology (STORK, http://storkinesiology.org/) was formed to help address these issues.

work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. This manuscript was preprinted and submitted to sports medicine with more authors. However, not all of those authors met the ICMJE guidelines for authorship, thus, the contributions of individuals who did and did not meet authorship guidelines are acknowledged below. All authors—ARC, ADV, MST, RR, DTM, AK, IML, JPM, MPB—made substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work, drafted the work or revised it critically for important intellectual content, provided final approval of the version to be published, and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Compliance with ethical standards

Funding No financial support was received for the preparation or publication of this manuscript.

Conflict of interest Aaron R. Caldwell is the current Steering Chair for the preprint server SportRχv, and is on the board for the Society for Transparency, Openness, and Replication in Kinesiology (STORK). David T. Mellor is an employee of the Center for Open Science, a non-profit organization whose mission includes advocating for increased transparency in scientific research, which includes the Registered Reports format. John P. Mills is the founder of SportRχxiv and the Executive Chair of STORK and Ian M. Lahart is the Editor of Physiology and Nutrition section of Registered Reports in Kinesiology. All other authors—Andrew D. Vigotsky, Matthew S. Tenan, Rémi Radel, Andreas Kreutzer, and Matthieu P. Boisgontier—have no conflicts of interest to declare. No financial support was received for the preparation or publication of this manuscript.

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