

AMS press release labelling system for new medical research

The Academy of Medical Sciences has made a set of recommendations to help raise public trust in medical research. One of these recommendations is for press releases to be given a clear label showing **a)** whether research findings have been through peer-review and **b)** a summary of the type of research.

This labelling system is meant to help journalists see at a glance the nature and significance of new research and act as an aid for press officers when discussing the work with authors.

How it works

The labels categorise the evidence according to whether it is peer-reviewed or not, what type of study it is and, when relevant, what form of life has been studied. The press officer should determine which of the below labels apply. The labels, consisting of just a few words, will be written at the top of each release.

<i>Peer-reviewed?</i>	<i>Type of evidence</i>	<i>Subject of study</i>
Yes No	Systematic review Randomised Controlled Trial Experimental study Observational study Case study	People Animals Human embryos Cells (includes micro-organisms, tissue, organs or non-human embryos)
	Simulation/modelling Literature review Survey Opinion piece/editorial	Not applicable

Explanation of terms

Peer-reviewed?

The peer-review system uses independent experts to scrutinise research. Peer-review is far from perfect, but it gives some confidence in the quality and robustness of the evidence.

Peer-reviewed – The entire study (including methods, results and discussion) was sent for independent, external review by relevant experts as part of a journal publication process.

Not peer-reviewed – For anything that doesn't fit into the 'peer-reviewed category' including, but not limited to, all conference abstracts, posters or presentations, and editorials and opinion pieces, even if they are being published in a journal.

Type of evidence

Meta-analysis – The author(s) combined the results, or data, from multiple previous studies and performed a new statistical analysis.

Systematic review – The author(s) collected and critically analysed multiple studies using criteria that were set before the start, as opposed to a literature review which can include any papers that provide evidence for a particular point.

Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) – The author(s) put the test subjects (often people or animals) in different groups at random and then manipulated at least one variable to see what impact it had. An RCT will include a control group that has not received the treatment being tested.

Experimental study – The author(s) manipulated at least one variable to see what impact it had on the subjects (often people or animals). The subjects may have been put into different groups, but not at random. There may, but will not always, be a control group that has not received the treatment being tested.

Observational study – The author(s) investigated whether X correlates with Y so cannot demonstrate cause and effect. The author(s) did not manipulate a variable, though they may have tried to measure it e.g. frequency of consuming diet drinks and obesity, where those who are obese may be more likely to drink diet drinks.

Case study – These consist of observations or data from a single patient or individual case eg in the form of a report that says 'We found patient X had a surprisingly high level of Y'.

Simulation / modelling – The author(s) used a computer simulation or mathematical model to predict the outcome, rather than measure real-world variables. The original values put into the model may have come from real-world measurements.

Literature review – Summarises and references a number of previously published studies on the topic, but does not include a new peer-reviewed re-analysis of data.

Survey – A study based solely on the responses to a series of questions. The survey label is not meant for studies where participants in a trial are given treatments x or y and then asked questions about their responses in follow-up.

Opinion piece/editorial – Based on the opinions of the author(s)/institution and may reference new research but does not include original new data.

