

reply

# Response to Peters, Abraham, and Crutzen (2012) from the EHPS Journal Editors

Peters, Abraham, and Crutzen's (2012) article is a very eloquent, thoughtful, and timely summary of the current trends toward greater disclosure in reporting of scientific data and materials in scholarly peer-reviewed publications. As researchers who have conducted the types of research referred to by Peters et al. including quantitative syntheses of various literatures and behaviour-change interventions, and as editors of the EHPS journals *Health Psychology Review* and *Psychology and Health*, we commend their call for disclosure and agree with many of the recommendations and guidelines they have proposed. In many respects, we feel that we are not far off having the capacity to meet those guidelines. For example, the EHPS journals already make many of the items relevant to full disclosure including questionnaires, intervention protocols, supplementary tables, analyses, and flow diagrams available as online supplemental materials available to all readers of the articles. The repository is permanent and freely accessible and is a facility made available by the publisher at no additional expense (Peters et al. rightly point out that the costs of the data storage for these materials is negligible), even though the content of the articles itself is only available to journal subscribers. The advent of this facility reflects a gradual 'sea change' in publishing for the disclosure of these materials, and really reflects the relatively recent advances in online publishing in which all journal content is available online and the capacity for storage has become less of a problem. In other words, the publishers of the EHPS journals are making these materials available now because they can

and many of the barriers to full disclosure have been removed. However, we acknowledge that more can be done in terms of improving the extent of the disclosure of data and materials from the research published in our journals and it is something we need to remedy in the future.

Our current model for disclosure and reporting is a voluntary one. Any requirement for the use of the online repository has been largely motivated by journal space concerns, rather than directly servicing the need for full disclosure. We do have relatively strict guidelines for the reporting of data and intervention protocols and content in the journal itself (e.g., adherence to MARS guidelines in the reporting of meta-analysis and PRISMA and CONSORT guidelines in the reporting of systematic reviews and interventions in *Health Psychology Review* and *Psychology and Health*) and our team of Associate Editors are aware of these standards and have a brief to adhere to them, particularly if they have not been flagged sufficiently by reviewers. However, this does not extend to disclosure of data and we currently have no official policy on the disclosure of data sets and files used by authors. General publishing guidelines suggest that the data should be made available to interested readers on request for a reasonable period after publication (usually 5 years), but, as Peters et al. have pointed out, this is not something that

**Martin Hagger***Editor, Health Psychology**Review***Mark Conner***Editor, Psychology & Health***Daryl O'Connor***Editor, Psychology & Health*

can be enforced by the journals and we recognise there is considerable variability in the extent and willingness of authors to share their data through this arrangement. This is particularly relevant to Health Psychology Review as researchers reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses frequently report attrition in studies eligible for inclusion in their analyses attributable to data being unavailable from the researchers. We have therefore resolved to update our policy on disclosure in this regard and aim to do so in the next year. This policy will involve the editors and advisory board of the publication as well as the publisher, who will likely have some familiarity and experience with these issues. We will face some challenges. The current publishing model, and one we expect to have for the foreseeable future, is not open access but through subscription only. So that will place constraints on the availability of some aspects of the article, by definition, but it will not affect the availability of online materials. From the perspective of the author, we see little impediment to increasing our requirements for the reporting of intervention protocols and manuals, to some extent there is

considerable precedent for that both within the EHPS journals and elsewhere, and is something that authors are coming to expect. There may, however, be problems with authors not wanting to make their data sets available, as this is currently only common practice in a few open access journals and not the current norm. Peters et al. have covered many of the reasons surrounding this potential reluctance and potential solutions. It may be that making these data available will be something that is dependent on some sort of embargo prior to publication or for a time afterwards or through disclosure and confidentiality agreements. In conclusion, we commend the call and solutions to full disclosure of research materials and data in scientific research in health psychology and see this as an opportunity to make our current policies more extensive and comprehensive to maximise the quality of the research published in the EHPS journals. ■

**Martin Hagger, Mark Conner, and Daryl O'Connor** on behalf of *Health Psychology Review* and *Psychology & Health*