

A number of recommendations were made by the [Independent Panel](#) that was convened to consider the question of retraction, and to review the processing, of the articles by Abramson and Malhotra. This document itemises the ways in which the journal has amended its processes and practices in response to those recommendations. Further details of each suggestion from the panel and its context can be found in the panel's [final report](#); page numbers for the report are given after each item below, and items are considered in the order in which they occur in the report.

1. Initial Submission (p11)

“Editors could consider developing guidance for internal use in relation to when Analysis articles that contain calculations and numerical extrapolations warrant statistical review.”

Such guidelines have been developed, and statistical reviews analogous to those provided for research articles are now sought for Analysis articles that rely on statistical argument.

2. Revision and Publication: Summary and Assessment (p12)

- A. “Senior or deputy editors should sign off revisions that include substantive additions to an article or changes in a “fact” box.”

Such changes are always seen by the editor handling the article in addition to the technical editor who is copy-editing it. In addition, handling editors are encouraged to escalate any concerns to the relevant Deputy Editor.

- B. “Extra attention should be given to manuscripts that have been noted by reviewers and editors to be controversial and potentially slanted or one-sided. “

Additional flags and warnings are now put in place for particularly controversial articles.

- C. “Editors might consider whether such pieces are best placed (and clearly labelled) as opinion pieces or whether they are best placed and clearly labelled as articles/analyses that are meant to have a more comprehensive and, according to author instructions, “an even-handed approach in evaluating evidence, a lucid line of argument, and a worthwhile conclusion.”

The editors feel that there is a place for articles that combine data and argument to make a case, and that Analysis is the format currently identified for articles of this type.

- D. “Although the article by Abramson et al was not press released, that by Malhotra, which was also clearly presenting a controversial view, was

<http://group.bmj.com/group/media/latestnews/Time%20to%20bust%20the%20myth%20of%20saturated%20fat2019s%20role%20in%20heart%20disease-%20says%20cardiologist.pdf>). Press releases should be used with great care in such contexts.”

Press releases are always seen by the authors of the article in question and by a Deputy Editor acting as ‘Duty Editor’. A weekly planning meeting ensures that particularly controversial articles are flagged up to the press release team. Our press releases aim to give a straightforward summary of the views as set out in the article. Because the

press release can only provide a very brief summary of a paper, we always provide journalists with the full text of articles and author contact details

- E. “Editors might give extra attention to the following issues when considering potentially controversial articles that postulate strong arguments: possible selective citing of material, failure to critically appraise evidence that is used to support authors’ arguments, and over criticism of evidence that does not support authors’ arguments.”
Editors are now alerted to consider these issues in particular in controversial articles, and to ask reviewers to do so.

- F. “Editors should carefully consider whether articles that include extrapolations and recalculations of numerical data need statistical review. “
As noted in response to item 1, we do now seek specific statistical advice for such articles.

- G. “They should also consider whether a paper that has been revised requires additional peer review.”
Editors discussed whether there should be a blanket policy of re-review after revision and decided against. However, re-review is required when substantial additions have been made, or changes to data and analysis, or when specific details have been requested by a specific reviewer, or after other escalation with colleagues. Editors should err on the side of caution when considering the need for re-review.

3. Review and comment on how criticisms and complaints against the articles were raised, and how the journal responded (p 14)

“The BMJ editorial staff should implement a significant event audit in relation to the need for the correction. The aim of the audit would be to try and identify what would need to have been in place to ensure that the correction was made in a more timely fashion.”

The editors undertook an end-to-end audit of the handling of the two papers and their associated corrections. This is presented in a separate document.