



Reference Transparency Checklist (RTC) and RefSight

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Background

References are essential for scientific credibility. However, citation errors are common, including incorrect titles, wrong DOIs, irrelevant references, and misrepresentation of findings. Studies report citation error rates ranging from 25–54%. The growing use of AI-assisted writing tools has further increased the risk of fabricated or misleading references.

Gap

Existing reporting guidelines, such as CONSORT and PRISMA, improve transparency in study reporting but do not evaluate the accuracy or relevance of individual references used in manuscripts.

Proposed solution

We propose

- 1) Reference Transparency Checklist (RTC): to improve transparency
- 2) RefSight: A software to check accuracy

Reference Transparency Checklist

It has the following components:

1. Reference number
2. Is the reference verifiable (DOI/ URL/ PubMed URL)?
3. If yes, add DOI, URL, or PubMed URL
4. Does the title match the actual source?*
5. Relevancy score (1-3)
6. Why is it relevant?
7. Year of publication
8. Page number(s) were cited



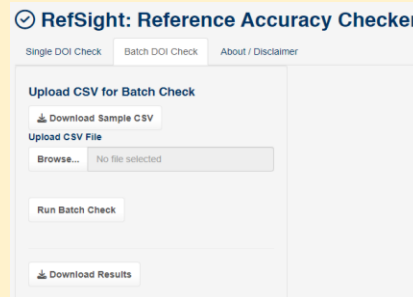
Download RTC

DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.31230517

Reference number	Is the reference verifiable (DOI/ URL/ PubMed URL)? (yes/no)	If yes, add DOI, URL, or PubMed URL (keep empty if there are no identifiers; if all present, use only one DOI → URL → PubMed URL)	Does the title match the actual source? (yes/no)	Relevancy score (1-3) (1 = minimal, 2 = moderate, 3 = high)	Why is it relevant?	Year of publication	Page number were cited
1	yes	10.25259/IJMR_1405_2024	yes	3	This study found that when one hand or leg is exercised, the perfusion index of the contralateral limb increases even when it is at rest.	2025	4

*RefSight: A Shiny application on R

It checks the accuracy of references from the DOI

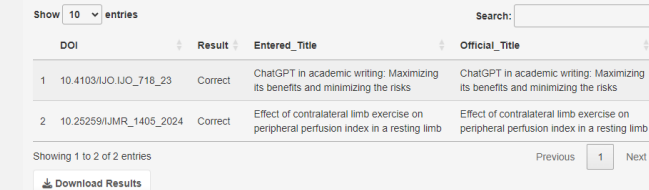


Download RefSight code

DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.31230622

How to use RefSight

1. Install R
2. Install RStudio
3. Download RefSight code
4. Copy the code and paste on Rstudio console
5. Download template CSV
6. Enter reference details
7. Upload CSV
8. Check the accuracy report



Potential impact

1. Citation accuracy
2. Reference relevance
3. Recency of references
4. Scientific credibility
5. Ease of editorial evaluation
6. Ease of peer review

Limitation

1. RTC filled by authors
2. RefSight is DOI-based

Download links

R: <https://cran.r-project.org/>

RStudio: <https://posit.co/download/rstudio-desktop/>

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