Null Results in Brief: Meeting a Need in Changing Times

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Since its introduction 9 years ago, CEBP has published Null Results in Brief (NRIB). These original reports of important *a priori* hypotheses are intended to minimize publication bias in the literature (1). A wide range of null associations have appeared involving genetic variants, exposures, gene-environment interactions, and other topics related to cancer prevention and control.

Since the initiation of NRIB, the needs of the field, as well as the state of science, have evolved. Although the Editorial Board strongly supports continuation of NRIB, the goals must change accordingly. We clarify here the guidelines and intent of the NRIB category so that potential authors may submit appropriate articles.

Submissions to the NRIB category should add to the current knowledge of cancer in humans (not animals or other experimental systems), and be useful to future investigators making decisions about replication and/or inclusion in meta-analysis and/or impact future research directions. The prioritization for publishing manuscripts of high public health importance for NRIB articles remains no different than for other CEBP articles.

We also clarify the criteria for NRIB format. Although the manuscript should provide sufficient description of the study so that readers can evaluate the results, detailed study methodology must be described elsewhere (e.g., in prior publications) and cited, given limitations to manuscript length; only methods that bear on the actual results that have not been previously reported should be described in the text. More detailed methods should be referenced. Supplemental material is generally not to be used to provide additional details about study methods or results. A critical aspect of NRIB pieces is that statistical power should be adequate, and a specific statement about the power of the hypotheses that have been tested is required. For studies reporting on prior publications, the power should be equal to or greater than in prior empirical publications.

Articles will be given highest priority if the authors can clearly specify hypotheses that show a biological rationale for the data being presented. Priority will be given to articles that address well-defined biological pathways; previously reported associations of high impact (including genome-wide associations); adequately powered interactions; and genotyping and haplotyping studies that involve multiple genes and pathways. For studies about biomarkers, the assays used should be well validated and biologically meaningful.

NRIB are intended to limit the impact of publication bias (1). The problem of publication bias is no less important today than it was in 2000. CEBP intends to continue to publish a limited number of high quality null results to ensure adequate representation of the broadest spectrum of association study results. For more details, please go to the journal website and the Information for Authors.

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed.

Reference

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