

# How to Avoid Waste in Medical Research

- Viewpoints of an Editor

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# Editor's Options

## 1. Reason to accept

Is this?

- New
- True
- Of interest
- Relevant

## 2. Reason to reject

- Has been done (over and over again)
- Methods are rotten
- Who cares what the results are
- It makes no difference, whatsoever

# The Road to Perdition

1. Unclear ideas → Improper conduct
2. Improper conduct → Inconclusive results
3. Inconclusive results → Unhappy funders
4. Unhappy funders → No future academic track

At the very heart of the academic drive –

*Publish or Perish*

# Food for thought

- More citizens (in Norway) with a PhD than there are farmers
- Too many (so-called) research questions are asked
- Medical journals are part of this - *Useful idiots*\*

\* Lenin VI. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Useful\\_idiot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Useful_idiot)

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It may pay to publish many mediocre articles rather than a few good ones

## Too many journals – too little good research

I sent my first manuscript to an international scientific journal in 1998. In those days it was normal for manuscripts to «go wandering». This meant that when a manuscript was rejected by one journal, it was sent on to another, normally less prestigious, journal than the first you had tried your luck with. When the manuscript was rejected by the second journal, it was sent on to a third. In the meantime, you waited. The wait for a response from the editors of journals was well known by researchers. It caused a lot of frustration and wasted time, but what might look like meaningless activity for outsiders was in fact not only that. The manuscript was often evaluated by external peer reviewers, and as a result authors received sound advice on how they could improve it.

publication may also be offered. The journal, for example, four weeks received by the editorial staff (3). professional quality assurance will otherwise have been. It may not have the paper that revealed Jon Sudbø's tracked (4).

These two phenomena, that it is simple and that quality control is under It has become easier for those who for those who are going to use the

# To Harness the Waste

Three issues,

- The state of art in Norwegian Medical Academia/University hospitals
- The current situation in Tidsskr Nor Legeforen
- How to influence future authors

# I. In Academia

Q: «Are the results of Systematic Reviews© accepted as a free-standing paper in a PhD thesis»?

A: «Not unless it is the *ouverture* to a Meta-analysis»

– Two «selfies»

## II. Tidsskr Nor Legeforen

### Systematic Reviews©

- Annual incidence of < 5
- «Paper of the Year»; 2002 –
  - All have been narratives



# Tidsskr Nor Legeforen

Published Review Papers – Some examples (1)

[http://tidsskriftet.no/article/3241512/en\\_GB](http://tidsskriftet.no/article/3241512/en_GB)

*“We conducted a literature search in PubMed with an emphasis on systematic review articles and meta-analyses. The search was completed in January 2014. We also included articles from our own literature archives”*

# Tidsskr Nor Legeforen

Published Review Papers – Some examples (2)

[http://tidsskriftet.no/article/3265059/en\\_GB](http://tidsskriftet.no/article/3265059/en_GB)

*“We have undertaken literature searches in Medline and EMBASE for the period May 2009–July 2014. Studies that did not include measurements of pulmonary function or refer to occupational exposure were excluded. We have also included three prospective studies on pulmonary function and occupational exposure that were not indexed with the search terms used for obstructive pulmonary disease”*

# How to Influence Authors

What is the difference between

- Systematic search and
- Systematic Review©

*<http://tidsskriftet.no/article/2110598>*

*[http://tidsskriftet.no/article/3048397/en\\_GB](http://tidsskriftet.no/article/3048397/en_GB)*

# Tidsskr Nor Legeforen

Chief Editor Charlotte Haug:

*<http://tidsskriftet.no/article/2110598>*

- «So far, review papers have a fairly short methods section that is limited to whether the literature search was «systematic» or «non-systematic». We regard these phrases as rather dissatisfactory and not at all clarifying."

# Empirical Evidence?

Q: Was Mrs. Thatcher right -

«There is no such thing as --- Experience»

# III. How to Influence Authors

Dissemination principle (KISS):

K - Keep

I - It

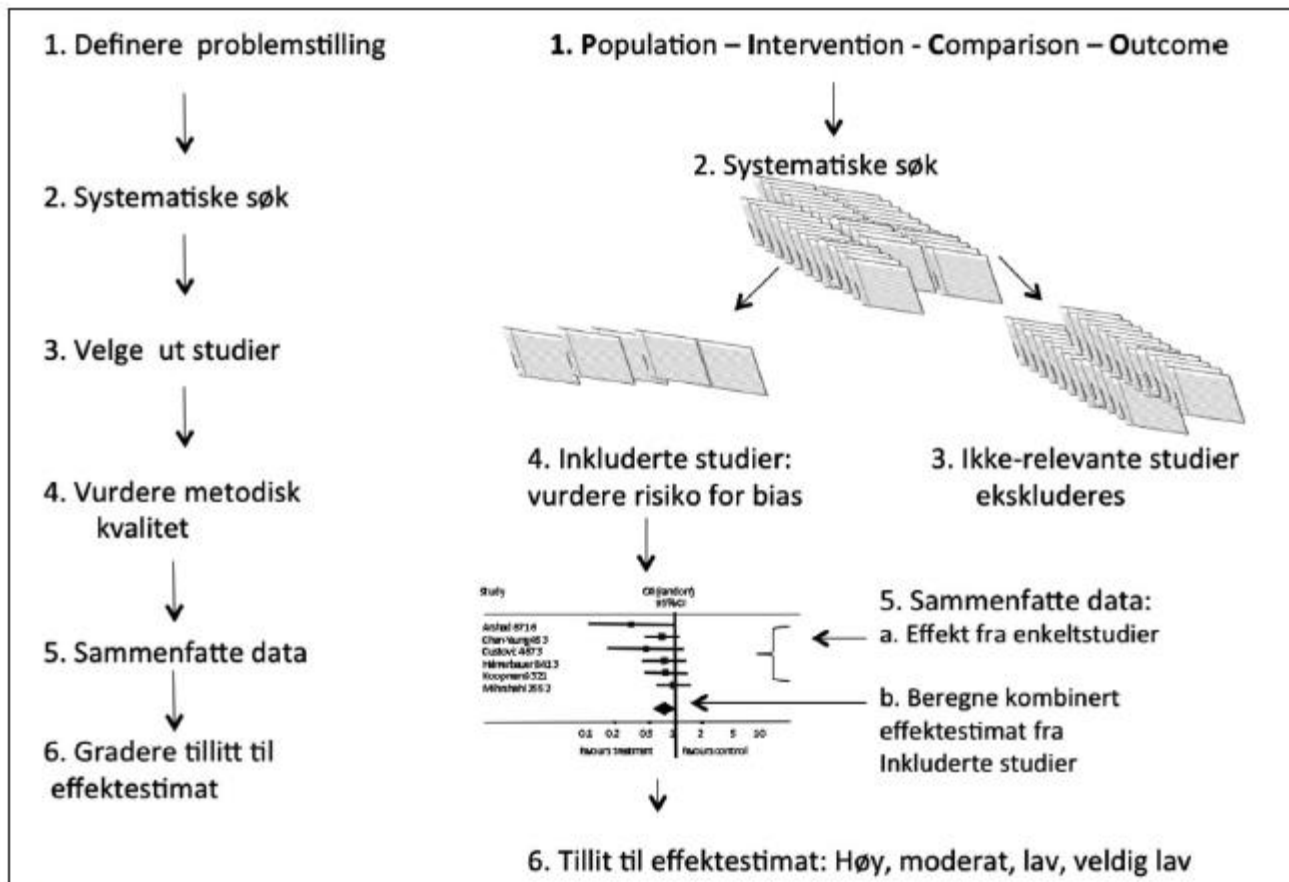
S - Simple

S - Sweetheart

# Two relevant papers – For a start

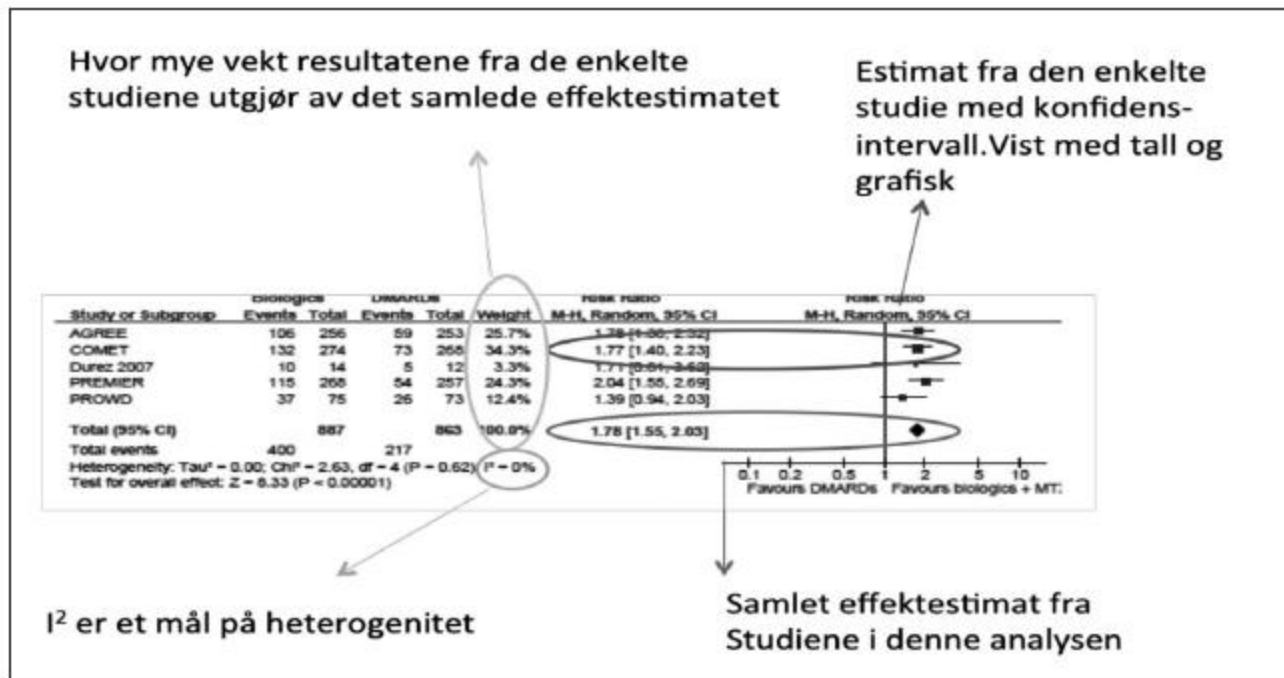
The Nor-way (*Start digging where you stand*)

- *Norderhaug I et al.* Hva er metodevurdering (HTA), en systematisk oversikt og en metaanalyse – når og hvordan brukes de? *Michael* 2012; 9: 109-17
- *Jamtvedt G et al.* Kunnskapsbasert forskning? *Tidsskr Nor Legeforen* 2014; 134: 10-1



Figur 1. systematisk oversikt





Figur 2. Metaanalyse

# Evidence Based Research

How to avoid waste; e.g., *via* intensified efforts to spread the news/use of Systematic Reviews©

Whose responsibility?

- Academic institutions (Universities/Hospitals)
- Medical journals; e.g., Tidsskr Nor Legeforen
- Kunnskapssenteret
  - Current status of methods dissemination?

# ERB – Dissemination of Use

Final rhetoric:

- Is there such a thing as --- a joint venture?