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Gender in the Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist

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Dear Prof Sheikh and editors

We are a group of researchers working in the Medical Sciences division at the University of Oxford. Many of us regularly use Equator's Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist(1) when reporting results from our studies using interviews and focus groups. The aim of this checklist is to encourage transparent and consistent reporting of methods and results, which we support. However, we would like draw attention to one particular criteria; Domain1, criteria 4 – 'gender'. The guide questions/description for this checklist item asks authors to state "Was the researcher male or female?".

We understand that COREQ is currently being expanded to include multi-centre, multinational, and multi-language studies. These updates provide good opportunity for both this planned update to COREQ(2), and the original checklist(1) to be updated to reflect more inclusive gender terminology. It may be more appropriate for this prompt to ask "What was the researcher's gender?", leaving this question open for people to share their own gender identity, rather than choosing from pre-defined categories. This item could be optional, so that people do not have to state their gender.

Adjusting this widely cited checklist, which is required by many journals, to enhance inclusivity, would be a timely and welcome change.

References

1. Tong A, Sainsbury P, Craig J. Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*. 2007;19(6):349-57.
2. Stamm T. EQUATOR Network, Reporting guidelines under development: Standards for reporting qualitative research: extension for multi-centre, multinational and multi-language studies (EX-QUAL) 2019 [Available from: <https://www.equator-network.org/library/reporting-guidelines-under-development/reporting-guidelines-under-development-for-other-study-designs/>].