We are pleasantly surprised to discover that our paper (1) has engendered comment (2, 3). Our goal was to contribute to debate and to the evolution of useful guidelines. We considered conjuring up an interim acronym, pre-STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) if you will, but luckily we lacked inspiration.

We recognize that our list of reportables can be viewed as “informal” in light of the developmental philosophies of CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) and STROBE. However, it codifies our responses to the frustrations of trying to evaluate large volumes of indifferently reported prospective research. We emphasized the practical and the basic without laboring over theory, simply wanting readers to be able to grasp the essence of a study and its validity without too many unknowns. We do agree that there is particular merit to the CONSORT-type approach, where wide and influential consensus and well-articulated rationale gave powerful impetus to improve practice. Of course, interpretation of whatever is found needs to be firmly rooted in a coherent causal frame, but that is another paper.

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