

# Reporting Experiments in Homeopathic Basic Research (REHBaR)



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**Introduction:** The aim of this study was to develop a criteria catalogue serving as a guideline for authors to improve quality of Reporting Experiments in Homeopathic Basic Research (REHBaR). Main focus was in the field of biochemical and biological experiments. So far, there was no guideline for scientists and authors available, unlike criteria catalogues common in clinical research.

**Methods:** A Delphi Process was conducted among experts who published experimental work within the last five years in this field. The process included a total of five rounds, three rounds of adjusting and phrasing plus two consensus conferences.

**Results:** A checklist of 23 items was achieved, augmented with detailed examples how to handle each item while compiling a publication. Background, objectives and possible hypotheses are necessary to be given in the part 'introduction'. The section 'materials and methods' is the most important part, where a detailed description of chosen controls, object of investigation, experimental setup, replication, parameters, intervention, allocation, blinding, and statistical methods is mandatory. In the 'results' section sufficient details on analysed data, descriptive as well as inferential are needed. Moreover, authors should discuss their results and interpret them in the context of current evidence. REHBaR was compiled for authors when preparing their manuscripts, and to be used by scientific journals in the reviewing process.

**Conclusions:** Reporting experiments in basic research in homeopathy is an important issue to state the quality and validity of gained results. A guideline for REHBaR seemed to be the first step to come to a commitment what information is necessary to be given in a paper. More than that, the catalogue can serve as a statement what the standards in good basic research should be. *Homeopathy* (2015) 104, 333–336.

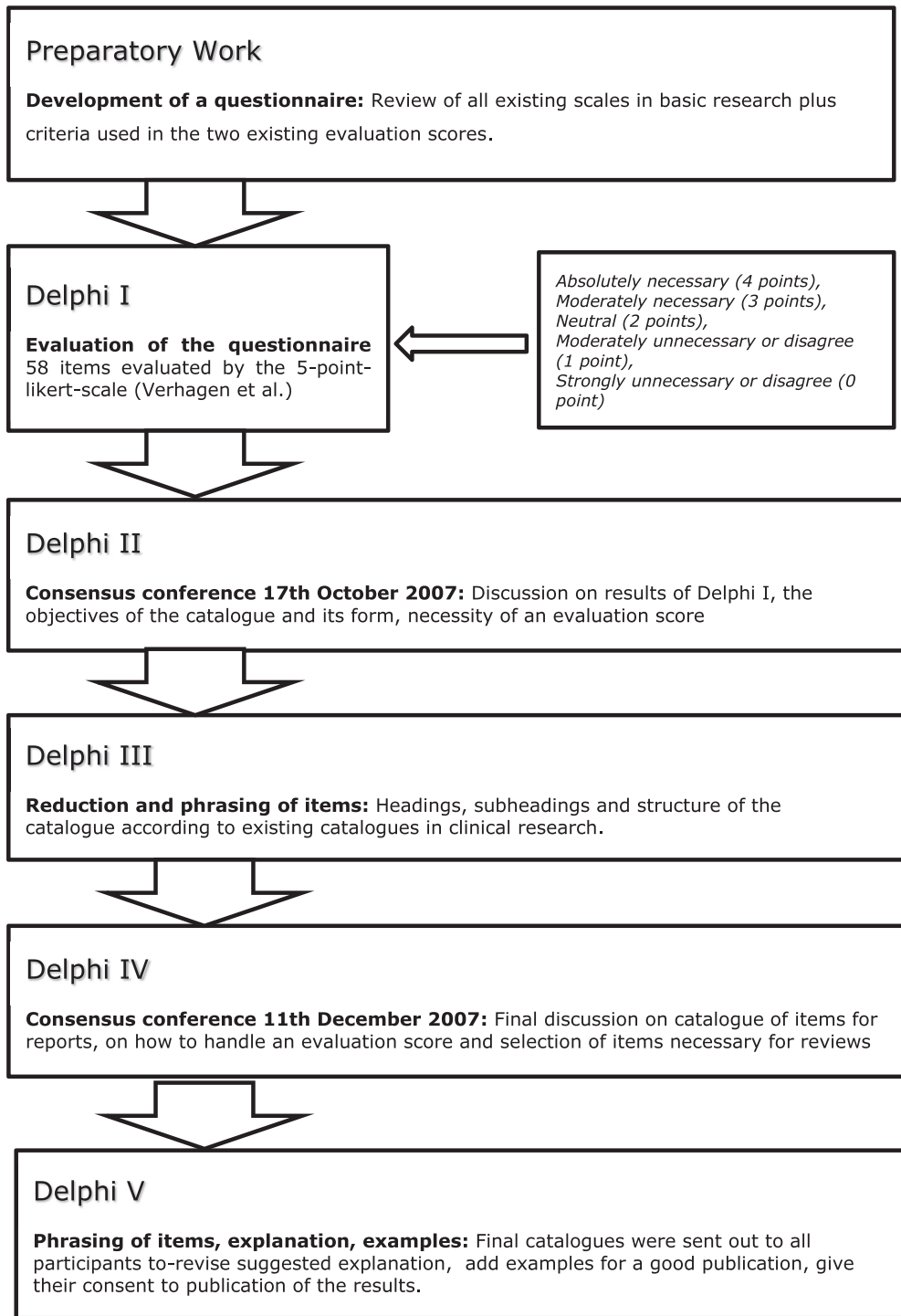
**Key words:** Reporting; Checklist; Quality; Experiments; Ultra high dilution; Homeopathy

## Introduction

Homeopathy is a highly controversial discussed subject due to the fact that in clinical research a proof of specific effects of homeopathy in general and of high potencies in particular is still lacking. Laboratory research is in the focus of interest to investigate whether homeopathic preparations have biological activity at all and which mechanism of action is the possible underlying principle. Any publication reporting research on homeopathy, particularly if reporting positive results, attracts attention and is carefully considered regarding the quality of the study.

As there are many experiments differing in design and quality<sup>1</sup> several efforts have been made to enhance the quality of basic research in homeopathy over the years. In UHD 1994, Schulte elaborated a number of standards for ultra high dilution research,<sup>2</sup> Linde *et al.* proposed checklists for preparing and reviewing publications<sup>3</sup> and Baumgartner *et al.* discussed methodological standards<sup>4</sup> already. Moreover there were two papers to establish scoring systems for assessing the quality of publications: The first applicable in experimental toxicology<sup>5</sup> the second for physicochemical research.<sup>6</sup> The latter score was adapted for the use in a systematic review on *in vitro* experiments.<sup>1</sup>

In the first place, a team of experienced researchers in this field came together to develop a new evaluation score applicable in all fields of basic research on homeopathy based on existing evaluation scores. Discussing the



**Figure 1** Flow chart of the Delphi Process from October 2007 to March 2009 among a panel of European scientists on homeopathy for developing the checklist REHBaR.

preparatory work during the consensus conference, we came to the result that before developing a score system a previous step is necessary: the development of a checklist for authors, peer reviewers and editors similar to several publication guidelines in clinical research (CONSORT, REDHOT, e.g.).

Reporting experiments in basic research concerned with homeopathic substances requires a complete and detailed

explanation of what exactly the trial was about, which materials were used and how it was conducted and assessed. Authors should provide all information to enable readers to understand and scientists to replicate their experiments. The aim of this investigation was to develop a criteria catalogue as a guideline for authors how to write a paper and how to include all indispensable information into a publication.

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