

# The REMARK checklist explained: How to use guidelines on reporting tumor marker prognostic studies

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In an "elaboration and explanation" of the REMARK (Reporting Recommendations for Tumor Marker Prognostic Studies) checklist, Doug Altman of the University of Oxford, UK and colleagues provide a detailed reference for authors on important issues to consider when designing, conducting, analyzing and reporting tumor marker prognostic studies. Writing in this week's *PLoS Medicine* (and co-published in *BMC Medicine*) the authors explain the checklist items in detail and illustrate each one with published examples of good reporting.

In this Guidelines and [Guidance](#) article, the authors say: "Physicians seek information about tumor markers to inform therapeutic decisions for individual patients... In order for information about the utility of tumor markers to be appropriately evaluated, the methods used to study the markers and the results generated must be fully reported."

Incomplete reporting of prognostic marker studies in cancer and other specialities is a regrettably frequent occurrence. The REMARK recommendations (published in 2005) provide criteria for assessing the completeness of reporting of such studies, though it is important to highlight that REMARK should not be used to dictate standards for the quality of research. Instead, it is intended to be a useful tool to assist with assembling the necessary information for judging the quality and relevance of research. Altman and colleagues aim to educate users of the REMARK checklist, leading to more effective implementation of its

recommendations, and as a result, more consistent, high quality reporting of [tumor marker](#) studies.

The authors comment: "Good reporting reveals the strengths and weaknesses of a study and facilitates sound interpretation and application of study results. The REMARK recommendations may also aid in planning new studies, and may be helpful for peer reviewers and editors in their evaluation of [manuscripts](#)."

**More information:** Altman DG, McShane LM, Sauerbrei W, Taube SE (2012) Reporting Recommendations for Tumor Marker Prognostic Studies (REMARK): Explanation and Elaboration. PLoS Med 9(5): e1001216. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001216](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001216)

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