

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Citation impact and social media visibility of Great Barrington and John Snow signatories for COVID-19 strategy
AUTHORS	Ioannidis, John

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Dan Wu LSHTM
REVIEW RETURNED	27-Aug-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	This is an interesting read about comparing scientific impact and social media impact between signatories of two groups of scientists who are holding different thoughts towards handling COVID-19. However, I am afraid that the research topic does not seem to fit the scope of research by BMJ Open. The author attempted to examine a group of scientists' academic and social media impact but this has not been linked to health-related outcomes, nor COVID-19 measures. This has little added value in terms of understanding a health-related question.
-------------------------	---

REVIEWER	Rakesh Singh Patan Academy of Health Sciences
REVIEW RETURNED	09-Sep-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	I'd like to thank the author for this work. I found the paper very interesting and contextual; therefore, it is worth publishing. However, I'd like to suggest the author to have a re-look at the paper to avoid few typo/grammatical errors.
-------------------------	--

REVIEWER	Viet-Phuong La Phenikaa University
REVIEW RETURNED	14-Nov-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	The paper addresses an interesting subject about The Great Barrington Declaration (GBD) and the John Snow Memorandum (JSM). The authors examine two debated strategies based on the citation impact and social media (Twitter) presence of the key GBD and JSM signatories. That said, the manuscript is very well written. However, I have minor suggestions that you might want to consider: - I wonder how the authors find and verify personal Twitter account as well as citation data of signatories. Is there any data validation technic used? - There are some typo errors throughout the manuscript, please proofread the text closely. Thank you for the opportunity to review the paper.
-------------------------	---

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Dr. Dan Wu, LSHTM

Comments to the Author:

This is an interesting read about comparing scientific impact and social media impact between signatories of two groups of scientists who are holding different thoughts towards handling COVID-19. However, I am afraid that the research topic does not seem to fit the scope of research by BMJ Open. The author attempted to examine a group of scientists' academic and social media impact but this has not been linked to health-related outcomes, nor COVID-19 measures. This has little added value in terms of understanding a health-related question.

Reply: Thank you for finding the work to be so interesting. As stated in the Aims and scope of BMJ Open: "BMJ Open is a medical journal. We consider papers addressing research questions in clinical medicine, public health and epidemiology. We also welcome studies in health services research, health economics, surgery, qualitative research, research methods, medical education, medical publishing and any other field that directly addresses patient outcomes or the practice and delivery of healthcare." This research manuscript is totally relevant to public health and epidemiology, it actually addresses one of the hottest questions in these fields. To make this more obvious, in the revision I have added: "The debate between the Great Barrington Declaration and the John Snow Memorandum has been one of the most important debates in the recent history of public health, touching on central issues in the handling of the major, lethal COVID-19 pandemic. Whether and how to use lockdown measures and whether focused protection of vulnerable populations is feasible and a good idea to adopt in pandemic response can have tremendous implications and ripple effects for public health, medicine, and society at large. Understanding the scientific credentials, field expertise, and social media presence of the champions of these different health policies is essential. Several scientists involved in these petitions have had also instrumental roles in leading or advising on public health policy in many countries and states."

Reviewer: 2

Dr. Rakesh Singh, Patan Academy of Health Sciences

Comments to the Author:

I'd like to thank the author for this work. I found the paper very interesting and contextual; therefore, it is worth publishing. However, I'd like to suggest the author to have a re-look at the paper to avoid few typo/grammatical errors.

Reply: Thank you for the kind appreciation of this work. I have gone carefully through the paper and have corrected typos/grammatical errors.

Reviewer: 3

Dr. Viet-Phuong La, Phenikaa University

Comments to the Author:

The paper addresses an interesting subject about The Great Barrington Declaration (GBD) and the John Snow Memorandum (JSM). The authors examine two debated strategies based on the citation impact and social media (Twitter) presence of the key GBD and JSM signatories. That said, the manuscript is very well written.

Reply: Thank you for the kind appreciation of this work.

However, I have minor suggestions that you might want to consider:

- I wonder how the authors find and verify personal Twitter account as well as citation data of signatories. Is there any data validation technic used?

Reply: The revised version clarifies that "Personal Twitter accounts are easy to match against a specific person, provided that the identity of that person can be discerned in Twitter. One cannot exclude the possibility that some of the people for which no Twitter account could be identified may have a pseudonymous Twitter account that hides their true identity. However, in this case they are not using their personal credentials and overall expertise profile to support the credibility and validity of their Twitter content. Moreover, some academics or researchers may not have personal Twitter accounts, but the centre, institute, or other organization they work in may have some social media presence. The current analysis did not aim to capture these Twitter accounts, since, by definition, they are not personal accounts, but serve a very different role."

As for citation counts, no database is perfect, and Scopus has some limitations. However, these are very well documented, they are explicitly described in the Discussion section and they are not large enough to affect the validity of the main analysis of this paper. I have expanded this pre-existing section as: "Citation indices

do not capture necessarily all aspects of scholarship.[21] The standardized, validated composite index used here overcomes many of the limitations of crude citation counting, but it is still not perfect. For detailed description of the methods (and their validation) involved in selecting the top-cited scientists across disciplines, one is referred to the background work done to generate the lists of top-cited scientists.[10-12] Precision and recall (author disambiguation in assigning papers) is not perfect in Scopus, and some authors may have under- or over-estimated citation metrics, but large errors are very uncommon.[22] Regardless, many scientists who are not included the lists of top-cited scientists may be at least as outstanding as those who are included, and many dimensions of scholarship, social responsibility, and broader impact may be missed by citation indices.[23]"

Finally, I have updated the searches for Twitter accounts and followers, since almost 8 months have elapsed since submission. The conclusions remain identical and the updated numbers have been added to the paper.

- There are some typo errors throughout the manuscript, please proofread the text closely. Thank you for the opportunity to review the paper.

Reply: Thank you for noticing this, I have carefully proofread the paper again and corrected any errors made.