REPORTING QUALITY OF OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES IN PLASTIC SURGERY NEEDS IMPROVEMENT - A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW (243)

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**Introduction:** Our objective was to determine the compliance of observational studies in plastic surgery with the Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) statement checklist.

**Methods:** All cohort, cross-sectional, and case-control studies published in 5 major plastic surgery journals in 2013 were assessed for their compliance with the STROBE statement.

**Results:** One hundred thirty-six studies were identified initially and 94 met the inclusion criteria. The average STROBE score was 12.4 (range, 2-20.1) with a standard deviation of 3.36. The most frequent reporting deficiencies were not reporting the study design in the title and abstract (30%); describing the setting, locations, and relevant dates, including periods of recruitment, exposure, follow-up, and data collection (24%); describing efforts to address sources of bias (20%); reporting numbers of individuals at each stage of the study (20%); and discussing limitations (40%).

**Conclusions:** The reporting quality of observational studies in Plastic Surgery needs improvement. We suggest ways this could be improved including better education, awareness among all stakeholders, and hardwiring compliance through electronic journal submission systems.

Key Words: observational studies, research methodology, reporting quality, STROBE, levels of evidence