

Preprints In The Public Eye

Preprint labelling user experience project

The aim of the project was to determine whether readers notice the labels that currently exist on preprint servers, whether they can distinguish between a preprint and a peer reviewed article and what would make the labels more noticeable and easier to understand.

- Twelve users (5 laypeople, 3 journalists, 3 researchers and 1 clinician) were asked to look at research related to Covid-19 posted on a preprint server ([Research Square](#), [medRxiv](#), [bioRxiv](#) and [SSRN](#)) and comment on what they noticed.
- Three users did not notice the labels stating that the preprints had not been peer reviewed.
- Five users wanted to get a better understanding of the preprint process and selection. For example, one said, “I don’t know what they are doing to validate their articles.”
- Suggestions to make the labelling more noticeable included: making the labelling bigger, moving the labelling to below the title to make it more noticeable, and creating a pop-up message for the reader to acknowledge.
- Users were able to distinguish between a preprint and published version of the same article because of the ‘professional’ look of the published article.

This project highlighted the need for noticeable labelling and clarity about the screening criteria used to determine what is posted on a preprint server.

Example of a label on a preprint server.

Caution: Preprints are preliminary reports of work that have not been certified by peer review. They should not be relied on to guide clinical practice or health-related behavior and should not be reported in news media as established information.

[COVID-19 SARS-CoV-2 preprints from medRxiv and bioRxiv](#)

medRxiv is receiving many new papers on coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. A reminder: these are preliminary reports that have not been peer-reviewed. They should not be regarded as conclusive, guide clinical practice/health-related behavior, or be reported in news media as established information.

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