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Writing Assignment #2- Primary vs Secondary Articles

When working in the scientific field there are different ways of presenting information for consumption along different levels of analysis. Our primary sources are the distilled efforts of an individual / group to provide a unique and original observation with experimental datasets. Typically you’ll see multiple highlights cores of a primary paper which are the introduction to familiarize yourself with the subject matter briefly, the methods which ascribe the methodology employed in the study, the results of said study, a discussion of those results, and finally any references used in the process of this information gathering.

As time goes on and you seek to understand new topics of interest, a review article provides an excellent footing and foray into the hitherto unknown discipline. As an example you might be focused on understanding how gut biomes in humans function and perhaps you need an overview of certain specific health issues that you simply lack exposure to. For example maybe you need an overview of what exactly eosinophilic enteropathy is and our current scientific understanding on it. Once you establish a baseline of knowledge, you can operate on already founded principals and expand the body of research you’re focusing on by incorporating this new knowledge.

There is another method of refining our understanding of the world at large and that is through the peer review process. Simply put it’s a body of scientists who are all part of the same field of study who provide insight, analysis, critique, and refutations of studies put forward in their journal. The idea is that it provides safeguards for information to ensure the quality of a study. Glaring errors in an experiment might go unnoticed to a scientist with his (or her) nose too close to the problem but a scientist agnostic to their original researchers findings can see these sort of slipups more easily. Crucially, like all good science it needs to be reproducible, make predictions accurately, and ultimately support the conclusion either in the affirmative or the negative.

From the two articles provided at the beginning of the assignment which are, “Hunting’s Disease: Mechanisms of Pathogenesis and Therapeutic Strategies” and “Permanent inactivation of Huntington’s disease mutation by personalized allele-specific CRISPR/Cas9” I can surmise that the latter is a primary source while the former is a review article. My evidence for the primary article comes from the format of its publication along with its focus of providing an observation of documented experiments. In the primary article the group seeks to explore and highlight a specific original examination of Huntington’s disease and its inactivation using CRISPR/Cas9. On the other hand, the former article goes into a broad explanation of the subject matter and the current state of understanding on Huntington’s Disease without delving into any original studies. No prediction is made, no data is collected to support a prediction, and ultimately it doesn’t provide any original insights into the subject.