

Sample Written Report

Manuscript	Serum vitamin D status and glycaemic control in adults with type 2 diabetes: a hospital-based cross-sectional study (fictional)
Article type	Original research about 3,800 words, 4 tables, 2 figures
Target	An international endocrinology journal with a STROBE requirement
Assessed by	Dr. Kadambini Rout, PhD

Overall assessment

The study addresses a clinically relevant question with an adequate sample (n = 312) and a clearly defined primary outcome. The main risks before submission are causal wording that the cross-sectional design cannot support, incomplete adjustment for known confounders, and a Discussion that does not engage with recent contradictory trials. With the targeted revisions below, the manuscript should be ready for submission.

Submission readiness: needs moderate revision before submission

Key strengths

- Clinically relevant question with a clearly defined primary outcome (HbA1c).
- Adequate sample size, supported by a stated sample-size calculation.
- Standardised laboratory methods, with assay details reported.
- Tables are clearly labelled and largely consistent with the text.

Key weaknesses

- Causal language ("vitamin D deficiency leads to poor glycaemic control") that a cross-sectional design cannot support.
- Confounders named in the Methods (season of sampling, BMI, physical activity, diabetes duration) are not all included in the adjusted model.
- A long Introduction (about 900 words) that repeats background material later covered in the Discussion.
- A brief limitations paragraph that omits the single-centre design and possible selection bias.

Likely reviewer concerns

Concern	Priority	How to address it
Causal interpretation of cross-sectional data	High	Replace causal wording with "associated with" throughout, including the Discussion and the Conclusion.
Incomplete confounder adjustment	High	Report a model adjusted for season, BMI, physical activity and diabetes duration, or explain why any were excluded.
Reporting guideline compliance	Medium	Add a completed STROBE checklist, a participant flow description and how missing data were handled.
Recent contradictory evidence not discussed	Medium	Discuss recent randomised trials with neutral results and explain how these findings fit alongside them.
Figure 2 duplicates Table 3	Low	Remove the figure, or replace it with a visual that adds information (see suggestions below).

Structural and logical issues

Abstract	Results report p-values without effect sizes. Add adjusted estimates with 95% confidence intervals.
Introduction	Shorten to about 500 words and end with a clearly stated aim and hypothesis.
Methods	Exclusion criteria are scattered across two paragraphs; consolidate them. State the cut-offs used for vitamin D categories, with a reference.

Results	The text repeats most table values. Summarise the key findings and refer readers to the tables for detail.
Discussion	Open with the main finding in one or two sentences rather than restating the Results; expand the limitations.
Conclusion	"Supplementation should be recommended" goes beyond the data. Align the conclusion with the study design and suggest what trials are needed.

Suggested tables and figures

- **New Figure 1:** a participant flow diagram (screened, excluded with reasons, analysed), as expected under STROBE.
- **Table 1:** keep participant characteristics by vitamin D status, and add a column showing missing data.
- **Table 3:** present unadjusted and adjusted estimates side by side, so the effect of adjustment is visible.
- **Figure 2:** replace the bar chart with a forest plot of adjusted associations by subgroup, if subgroup analyses were prespecified.
- **Supplementary file:** the completed STROBE checklist.

Recommended next steps

- Address the two high-priority concerns first, as they are the most likely causes of rejection.
- After revision, a Substantive Edit would improve flow and consistency between the text, tables and figures.
- If the target journal is not yet fixed, a journal suitability analysis can identify 5 well-matched options.

The assessment fee is credited in full if a publication support service is booked within 30 days.