What do we mean by the directions “cranial” and “caudal” on a vertebra?: response to reviews and editorial comments

Mike Taylor

First, I would like to apologise that it has taken so long — almost a full year — to handle these reviews, which were sent on 3rd January 2020. I am sure everyone involved understands that this has been a strange and difficult year. Nevertheless, the delay is entirely my own fault, and I apologise.

# Comments on review 1 (Ryan D. Marek)

XXX Marek’s multiple comments on the structure of the manuscript are noted, and taken into account (along with those of the other reviewer and editor) in the radical restructuring of the new version of the manuscript.

XXX We also accept his point that the tone of the original submission is not to everyone’s taste. While we do not necessarily agree that more formality is always better, we recognise that there is a balance to be struck, and that the first version of this manuscript erred too far in the direction of informality. We have accordingly reworded the prose extensively.

XXX Relatedly, we have greatly reduced the role in the new manuscript of the account of how the question of orientation came to our attention, agreeing that “making it the focal point of the submission is detrimental to the paper” and that the more substantial questions of anatomical meaning are a stronger focus for the introduction.

XXX We have reworked and combined some of the illustrations along the lines that Marek suggests.

We note that that in the Rating Scale Questions, Marek ticks the “disagree” column for the statements “This article adequately engages with the relevant scholarly literature” and “The literature review was thorough given the objectives and content of the article”. The reason this paper was written is that there *is* no relevant scholarly literature, so we are at a loss as to what Marek intends us to do in response to this scoring. Since Tschopp’s scoring of these questions is neutral, and since Marek does not mention any specific papers that he thinks we should have cited or discussed, we have not been able to identify any changes to make in this respect.

We take Marek’s point that “comparing multiple quantitative measures of vertebral anatomy across a range of organisms/vertebral regions” would be of interest, but we consider this work beyond the scope of the present paper, in which we aim simply to establish definitions.

# Comments on review 2 (Emanuel Tschopp)

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# Comments on handling editor’s summary (Peter Falkingham)

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