An Editor's Perspective on Preparing, Reviewing and Selecting Manuscripts for Publication

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Editor's Perspective on Publishing

CDC

Poll

- ❑ How many times have you authored/coauthored papers in peer review journals (never, 1-5, 6-10, 10+)?

- ❑ Are you currently working on a manuscript for a peer review journal (yes/no)?

- ❑ What part of manuscript preparation and submission are most interested in learning about (manuscript structure, understanding the review process or editorial decision making)?

What is the Value Added in Publishing?

- ❑ **Providing leadership**
- ❑ **Influencing future research and program activities**
- ❑ **Demonstrate program visibility and value**
- ❑ **Providing evidence for policy and program decisions**

What Does Publishing Do For You?

- ❏ **Helps clarify your thought processes and reasoning**
- ❏ **Documents the contributions of your work and the value of the program**
- ❏ **Facilitates learning**
- ❏ **Reality of determining hiring and promotions**

PREPARING THE MANUSCRIPT

Manuscript Structure

❑ **Introduction**

  ▪ Clear, concise, **current** review of the literature

  ▪ End with clear statement of the problem/gap and how your work is going to add something new

❑ **Methods**

  ▪ Study design

  ▪ Measures

  ▪ Analytic Methods

  ▪ Model building approach/Theoretical framework

Manuscript Structure

❑ **Results**
  ▪ Factual reporting (no interpretation)
    • Describe participants,
    • Summarize important descriptive analysis
    • Summarize key findings of multivariable analysis
  ▪ Text should focus on salient findings
  ▪ Avoid duplication of text/tables

❑ **Conclusions/Discussion**
  ▪ Consistent/inconsistent with previous studies
  ▪ What this analysis uniquely contributes
  ▪ Strengths/limitations
  ▪ Next steps (introduce your next paper)

Preparing for Submission

- ❑ **Identify the target journal before you start writing**
- ❑ **Read journal articles in the journal for style and format**
- ❑ **Read (and follow) instructions to authors**
- ❑ **Write the manuscript in this order**
  - ▪ Introduction
  - ▪ Methods
  - ▪ Results
  - ▪ Discussion
  - ▪ Abstract
  - ▪ Title

Style

- ❑ **Clear/concise language (NIH has a great plain language course on line)**
- ❑ **Short sentences/avoid run-on sentences**
- ❑ **Avoid jargon and obtuse words**
- ❑ **Paragraphs should have a topic sentence and relevant supporting statements**
- ❑ **New thought new paragraph**
- ❑ **Include most current references possible**

Common Submission Mistakes

❑ **Address letter to wrong editor/journal**

❑ **Misspellings**

❑ **Topic not a good match with the journal**

❑ **Ignoring instructions to authors/journal requirements**

- Word count
- Tables/figures
- Article structure

Common Content Problems

- ❑ **Lack of specificity**
- ❑ **Nothing new to say**
- ❑ **Use of outdated/non-current data**
- ❑ **Over speculation/interpretation of results**
- ❑ **Presenting new analysis in the discussion**
- ❑ **Discussing topics not related to your analysis/data**

Manuscript Submission

- ❏ **Verify your manuscript meets all submission requirements**

- ❏ **Cover letter should address the (correct) editor by name**

- ❏ **Include the correct journal name**

- ❏ **Briefly explain why this is important for the journal's readership to know about**

- ❏ **Suggest reviewers**

REVIEWING THE MANUSCRIPT

Peer Review Process

- ❑ **Takes time**
- ❑ **Editors/Associate Editors read and discuss all papers**
- ❑ **50% of reviewers who are asked agree**
- ❑ **Not all who agree complete the review**
- ❑ **Reviewers are often late**
- ❑ **Reviews are often uninformative/not constructive**
- ❑ **Without on time, relevant, constructive reviews peer review system doesn't work**

SELECTING THE MANUSCRIPT

Editorial Decision Factors

- ❑ **Reviewer comments**
- ❑ **Editor's assessment**
- ❑ **Fit with the journal**
- ❑ **How much has been published on the topic**
- ❑ **Volume of submissions**
- ❑ **Best use of journal resources**

Rejection Happens

- ❑ **Rejection may be an indication of a miss-match with the journal**

- ❑ **Many papers are reviewed at 2+ journals before publication**

- ❑ **Take reviewers suggestions and revise before submitting to another journal**

- ❑ **Make sure any resubmission updates the references/literature review**

Responding to Reviewers

- ❑ **Respond point by point, document responses**
- ❑ **It is OK to disagree with reviewers, explain why**
- ❑ **Don't ignore or discount comments**
- ❑ **Don't be argumentative regardless of how unprofessional the reviewer comments are**

After Acceptance

❑ **Production takes time**

  ▪ Other articles in the queue

  ▪ Format for print/web publishing is resource intensive

❑ **Be responsive to copy editor queries**

❑ **Carefully review author proofs**

❑ **Verify author contact and funding information is correct and complete**

Thank You

For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.