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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The road to publication: Advice from journal editors

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Key words: academic publishing; brevity; clinical trials; evidence-based medicine; general dermatology; journal choice; peer review process; reviewer comments; scientific manuscript; scientific method; statistics; study planning phase; the Equator Network.

Anyone who invests their time in writing a scientific manuscript will want a decent chance of it being accepted (Table I).^{1,2} We present practical tips to increase the chances of acceptance.

BEFORE PREPARING YOUR ARTICLE

Choose a clinically relevant topic and involve a statistician or methodologist to ensure that the study

is adequately powered. The Equator Network (<https://www.equator-network.org/>) provides links to checklists for all the main study types (eg, clinical trials, case reports, observational studies, etc.). The use of the relevant checklist in the study planning phase ensures that important elements are not omitted.

Preregistration of clinical trials (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/>) is a requirement to minimize selective outcome—reporting systematic reviews, and

Table I. Reasons for publishing

Publishing reasons	Benefits
Knowledge enhancement	Any attempt to publish an observation or conclusion demands extensive study on that topic. This expands the knowledge base of the individual, stimulating them to stay updated with the latest developments in the field.
Validation of the efforts	Publications can bring recognition and record it for posterity.
Benefit for a larger cause	Be it an atypical clinical finding, correlation, or a novel concept, the peers and professional community at large can benefit from it. Publishing the information is the way to showcase it to the world.
Strengthen the résumé	A strong résumé is a passport to professional advancement, and the quality of research work as documented by publications will undoubtedly enhance the impact of one's résumé.
Value as a speaker/scientific content creator	Publications serve as a reliable and unbiased basis for assessment of one's expertise in a field.
Project funding access	Having publications to substantiate the academic background and accountability of the applicant makes it easier to obtain support for further research.
Higher learning: doctorates, university research positions, and residency applications	Research and publication has become a key factor for increasing the chances for matching.

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Table II. Comparison of full-length article versus brief reports/research letters

	Full-length article	Brief report/ research letter
Type of analysis	Large studies including placebo-controlled trials. Complex, multiple analysis and experiments, multiple steps in the analysis	Small studies and proof of concept. Usually single analysis or single step, simple <i>Journals have limited page budgets, and they can accept many more brief reports compared to full-length articles. Choose the most concise format to present your findings.</i>
Size of the sample	Very large sample	Limited number of patients

Table III. Tips for recognizing predatory journals

Generic email referring to "Dear author," "Dear professor," or "Dear Researcher"
Request for a quick submission with less than 30 d turnover time
Generic email server from the sender, not a journal email
The message claims an impact factor that cannot be verified
The journal has a name that is very similar to an existing reputable journal
The invitation email has errors and typos
Lack of a transparent peer review process
Inconsistent expertise with research topic requested

meta-analyses can be registered in the PROSPERO database.

BRIEF COMMUNICATION VERSUS FULL-LENGTH ARTICLE

Brevity is valued in science. Deliver your message as efficiently as possible (Table II).

CHOOSING A JOURNAL

Choose the best vehicle to reach your intended audience. Most readers now access articles online regardless of whether a print version of the journal also exists. Some journals, such as *JAAD*, are received as a member benefit, whereas others require a subscription, limiting widespread access. "Open access" publishing is an alternative where authors

Table IV. Recommendations for replying to reviewers' comments

Recommendation	Reason
Answer completely	- All the reviewers' comments should be responded to or commented on. - In sequential order. - Even comments that seem "irrelevant" should be taken care of and responded to. - Separate long paragraphs that contain more than 1 query/comment, and respond to each separately.
Answer politely	- Respond to each comment in a polite manner. - If you disagree with a comment, respond politely and explain why you disagree.
Answer with evidence	- Any statement must be supported with evidence. - Justify the reason for disagreement with the reviewer.
Answer with creativity	- Some comments might seem impossible to respond to at first, but thinking outside the box and showing reviewers and the editor why the project will impact patient care may sway reviewers - If it seems that there are no data for a response, gather data, perform new experiments, and attempt to answer each query.

pay the cost of publication to make the article freely accessible to anyone. Reputable open access journals include *Frontiers* and *PLOS*, but "predatory journals" also exist (Table III).³

NAVIGATING THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

Reviewers generously dedicate their time with the goal of improving the quality of our literature. Reply respectfully, and explain what changes were made and why some may not be appropriate⁴ (Table IV).

Reasons manuscripts are accepted

A manuscript that is well written and follows the scientific method is typically well rated by reviewers and editors. Table V shows the reasons why manuscripts are accepted.⁵

Reasons manuscripts are rejected

High-impact factor journals have a low rate of acceptance. We have detailed key reasons why manuscripts are rejected, including lack of relevance

Table V. Reasons manuscripts are accepted

Sections	Description
Title	Should never pose a question. Should reflect study design and outcomes. Ideally should be an actionable and well-summarized message.
Abstract	Should be concise and logical and contain all key details of the message. This is what researches can find on PubMed, leading them to your manuscript.
Manuscript design	It should have a logical flow, and ideas should come in an order that is easy to follow by readers. Abbreviations and terms should be consistent and correctly stated throughout the manuscript.
Introduction	Should focus only on the question you are trying to solve. The “research gaps” provide a framework on why the specific research is important. The primary objective should be clearly stated.
Methodology	The methodology has to be sound and reproducible. Sample size must be adequate to determine a clinically relevant difference and answer the clinical question.
Results	Should be presented clearly, precisely, and focused on the relevant findings, utilizing simple standard statistical methods. Information can be backed-up by the tables. Results should not express opinion or conjecture, just results.
Figures	They should be of high quality (300 dots per inch for clinical photos, histopathology, and imaging techniques destined for a print journal). Graphical illustrations should be to scale. Taking special care for patient privacy is of outmost importance: jewelry, tattoos, etc. are considered identifiable. The name of the entity should appear in the legend so that images are searchable by diagnosis.
Discussion	Should focus on the most important findings and how they alter practice in the light of the available literature. Always start with a summary of the key findings and focus on important aspects. Temper your conclusions to align with the data and recognize that association does not equal causation.
Conclusions	Should explain the consequences for patient care and further research.
References	The references have to be well-selected, precise, and formatted as per the journal style and should support the statement in the manuscript.

Table VI. Reasons manuscripts are rejected

Wrong journal	Your manuscript may be worthy of publication but of little interest to the journal's primary readership. Sometimes it is best to ignore the impact factor and simply ask yourself, “who would be most interested in reading about what we've done.”	Q15
Lack of originality	Perform a good literature search. If it has been reported before, it may not be accepted unless there is a new relevant aspect to report.	
Lack of clinical relevance	Before putting a lot of time into a project, ask yourself, what will this mean to the average reader of the journal?	
Lack of patient consent	Bars over the eyes are not adequate to protect identity. Identifiable marks, tattoos, or jewelry are not acceptable.	
False claims of “first report”	Unless you have performed a thorough systematic search across many years and many languages, it is hard to ensure the “first report” statement. An acceptable option is “A PubMed search of the English language literature using the search terms “XXX” failed to reveal prior reports of XXX.”	Q16
Use of superlatives	Do not overstate your findings. Be honest about limitations, and avoid terms such as “spectacular, best, superb, excellent, rapid, and robust.” Be sure that graphs are appropriately scaled and do not exaggerate results.	Q17
Claims of “safe and effective”	In the United States, the phrase “safe and effective” has legal meaning and should be reserved for product licensing (Food and Drug Administration) based on registered clinical trials. It is better to state the actual outcomes in the study and whether or not the agents were well tolerated.	Q18
Rambling discussions	Longer is not better. Readers invest valuable time in reading a journal and value concise communication and take-home points.	
Unnecessary repetition	Do not repeat material in the introduction, methods, results, and conclusion. Avoid the “cut and paste” function in your word processing software.	
Poor English	If English is not the first language of the authors, have the manuscript reviewed by a native English speaker before submission.	
Inadequately powered study	The first step in any research is to determine the size of a clinically meaningful difference and then calculate the needed sample size. This is of critical relevance and a reason for rejection.	

Table VII. Final checklists before submitting a manuscript

Checklist	Comment
Is this the right journal for this manuscript?	Read the journal's scope/aim.
Did I read the journal's Instructions for Authors?	Check article types and all requirements.
Do the data support the conclusion?	Statistical analysis should support your key message. Beware of the various forms of bias.
Did I cite all my sources and perform a complete literature search on the subject?	In the correct format for the specific journal.
Did I revise my manuscript as requested by previous reviewers?	Revisions almost always improve the manuscript.
How is my English?	There are services to help you if English is not your native language.
Did all the authors review and approve the final manuscript?	The guidelines posted in the ICMJE (https://www.icmje.org/) are of help to define an "author."
Did I review the journal submission checklist in the Author Guidelines?	Most journals have their own checklist for you to review before submitting your manuscript.
Does my cover letter convey the relevance and the quality of my research?	First impressions are extremely important, and the editor's (and reviewer's) first impression of the quality of your manuscript will be from your cover letter. It should clearly and succinctly state the goal of your research, the methodology used, the results, and implications for clinical practice.

or originality and compromised patient privacy
[T6] (Table VI).^{6,7}

WE WANT YOU TO SUCCEED

Journal editors understand that you have put your heart and soul into your work. We want you to
[T7] succeed. A final checklist (Table VII) might be of aid when preparing your submission.

Conflicts of interest

None disclosed.

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