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

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Editor’s Perspective on Publishing
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.