ABSTRACT

Publication is both an art and a science. For the beginner, not knowing the intricacies of publication, choice of subject and the appropriate journal to get their work published are major obstacles. In this article, the authors share their experience on how to go about getting an article published and selecting the most suitable journal for publication. They hope this article stimulates medical writing.

Key words: Art of publication, selection of journal, manuscript writing

INTRODUCTION

Publishing is all about sharing and documenting ones’ experiences to enrich oneself and others. In the medical field, publication is a source of professional advancement. Other reasons for trying to get one’s work published may be recognition by peers, career advancement, or improving opportunities for higher studies. Publication might involve getting one’s work recognised, reporting a rare case, or sharing experiences of a novel diagnostic or therapeutic approach, resulting in knowledge dissemination and professional advancement. To achieve these goals, the manuscript has to be published in the most appropriate journal.

APPROACH TO JOURNAL SELECTION

Shortlist names of journals

The first thing to do is to shortlist a few specialty journals to which the article could be sent for publication. Most authors submit the article to a journal belonging to their own discipline. But depending on the topic it can be submitted to journals of other disciplines also. For example, a surgeon may choose to submit a manuscript related to the thyroid to a journal of surgery or, depending on the focus of the manuscript, to a journal of pathology, medicine, dermatology, endocrinology, or radiology. This wide approach not only ensures a broader readership for the article but also comes in handy while resubmitting the work to another journal.

Charge vs open access

Many journals charge authors for publication, depending on the type of article. A few others charge a fee for color reproduction. Readers may also get to read an article for free or for a fee. In the latter case, the journal gets limited readership. This fact may be borne in mind before submission.

Indexed journals

Before submitting an article, one should check whether the journal is indexed or not. Articles published in indexed journals carry greater weightage. As per guidelines of the Medical Council of India, a minimum of four research publications in a national journal indexed in the Index Medicus and one research publication in an international journal are desirable for appointment as associate professor and professor at teaching departments. Many institutions give cash awards to authors for their publications in indexed journals.

Impact factor

The impact factor of a journal is calculated by dividing the number of current citations a journal receives to articles published in the last two years by the number of articles published during the same time. Eugene Garfield, the creator of the impact factor maintained that while “the impact factor is not a perfect tool to measure the quality of articles, there is nothing better, and it has the...
advantage of already being in existence and is, therefore, a good technique for scientific evaluation.” Authors may use it to compare the stature of different journals.

**Periodicity**
Journal issues may be published monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, four-monthly, semi-annually or annually. The higher the number of issues published in a year, the greater is the chance of publication of the submitted article.

**Manuscripts usually published by the journal**
Before submitting a manuscript, the author should go through the past issues of the journal and understand the type of articles published in it. While a few editors give preference to original articles, a few others prefer to publish letters to the editor, while a few prefer case reports. At times, one may even be asked to convert a case report to a letter to editor and resubmit the article.

**Acceptance rate**
Before submitting an article to a journal, the author should check the acceptance rate of the journal. Usually, specialized journals have a higher acceptance rate than journals of broader specialties. Newly indexed/launched journals also have a higher acceptance rate.

**National or international**
Authors who desire to have their articles published should check before submission whether the journal is regional, national or international. If one writes an article to earn recognition in the desired field, then one should submit it to national or international journals of repute in that field. In addition, the performance of the journal should also be considered for selection.

**Journals’ performance**
MedKnow publishers provide information regarding the total number of articles submitted and the average number of days taken by the journal in the various stages of accepting and publishing the manuscript. From this, authors can get an idea about the number of days it may take before acceptance and publication of the manuscript.

**Article in print, electronic media or both?**
Some journals are available only as print copies while some others are available only in online mode. Many journals are available in both formats.

**Peer review**
Peer reviewed journals are regarded as reputed journals. They usually publish quality articles, as authors get assistance from experts in the field. Editors ask for the opinion of reviewers before accepting an article.

**ART OF WRITING A MANUSCRIPT**
Read the instructions to authors before starting and prepare the manuscript accordingly.

**What’s new in the article**
Give reasons for the editor to accept the manuscript. Before writing an article, consider—“Is the paper is worth writing?” Before submitting, ask the question – “Why would the editor accept my manuscript? Is there anything new? Is the disease rare?” Editors usually accept a manuscript because of two reasons: one is that the manuscript has some new or different finding, and second, the disease/finding is very rare. Manuscripts with a new or different finding are preferred to manuscripts featuring a rare disease. One common mistake made by authors is that they concentrate on already known facts because of easy availability of references. Authors should instead concentrate on new findings and elaborate on them. Before submission, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your manuscript.

**Article categories available in the journal and the number of articles published in that category**
In a given journal, many article categories are available for publication (e.g., original article, review article, letter to the editor, commentary, case report, quiz, tributes etc.). Among these, editors may not get many articles for categories such as quiz, commentary, tributes, history, tips, experiences etc., Articles submitted in these categories carry a higher chance of publication.

**Topic**
Try to select a topic on which not many studies are available. A plethora of material already available on your topic may be one of the reasons for return of the manuscript. Decide on the message and make sure that the message is clearly conveyed.

**Title**
Thousands of papers lie buried in medical literature, only because their title did not designate the subject properly. A busy physician usually only reads articles that feature subjects relevant to his practice, especially those that carry attractive titles. The title of the article plays a major role in acceptance of the manuscript too. An ideal title should be short, attractive and highlight the new information detailed in the manuscript.

**Support for data**
References form the backbone of medical writing. A common reason for rejection of a manuscript is the lack of validation of hypotheses/claims made. Always gather references well in advance in support of the hypotheses/claims made in the manuscript. If the results differ in a few respects from the previous studies, such a study is more likely to be accepted. However, a study that differs substantially or carries no
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difference from previous ones usually gets rejected, especially if no substantive evidence is offered. Indexed references that can be easily accessed are preferred to those from obscure sources.

Histopathology reports
While reporting a rare entity, always try to incorporate a photomicrograph in the manuscript.

Inclusion of journal references
Include a few references from the journal in which one wants to publish the article.

“Who cares” and “so what”
Successful publication involves presenting the research idea to your trusted colleagues and obtaining their opinion as to its likely relevance, utility or interest, early in the course of writing an article. A direct response at this stage, particularly if the research idea fails the test, can save much effort and disappointment at a later stage. The publishability of an article is linked to the responses to “Who cares?” and “So what?”

Spelling and grammar
Before submission of the article, check the spellings (short cut key F7 on your computer) to avoid errors.

CONCLUSION

The selection of the journal plays a crucial role in getting an article published. Selecting an ideal journal will help in procuring an author well-deserved fame. Even if an article gets rejected by one journal, authors should read the reviewers’ comments about the article and resubmit to another journal after revising the manuscript.

What’s known
Very few articles are available on the art of publication and selection of journal for publishing.

What’s new
Authors discuss how to get one’s work published by correct selection of journal and adopting the right protocols while constructing a manuscript.

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Cite this article as: Singh A, Singh S, Mercy P, Singh AK, Singh D, Singh M, Singh P. Art of publication and selection of journal. Indian Dermatol Online J 2014;5:4-6.

Source of Support: Nil, Conflict of Interest: None declared.