Commentary

Streamlined manuscript submission guidelines: Beyond overdue

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With “high impact” medical journals having acceptance rates ranging between 5 and 11% we are all very familiar with emails similar to the one above. Such responses do not generally reflect the quality of the authors’ manuscript, but have more to do with a journals focus, load and target audience. Considering that there are currently 5153 medical journals indexed in the National Library of Medicine’s (NLM) Medline [1], authors quickly resubmit their manuscript to other journals. Although medical journals serve as the vehicle to communicate cutting edge science; a level of inertia confounds their manuscript submission processes.

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has outlined guidelines on the general structure and reporting of processes.

The system should facilitate the identification of journals appropriate for the topical content of the manuscript, followed by the ability to submit to the selected journal. If the manuscript is rejected by the first journal, the authors would be able select another journal for submission of the manuscript. The only caveat with regard to immediate submission is that the authors may wish/need to incorporate changes suggested in the rejecting reviewers' comments. The system could also maintain author profiles, link previous publications, and updated affiliation information, contact data, and conflict of interest disclosures.

Such a system would require time for development and implementation. Thus we suggest that a streamlined format be developed (with input from editors of major medical journals) which would accepted as a “universal” manuscript format for submission to participating journals. If professional organizations such as the ICMJE and NLM advocate for this standard, it could serve as the initial step in development of a universal submission process.

Ethical approval

N/A.

Funding

None.

Author contribution

ZS conceived the topic. All authors contributed to and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amsu.2017.11.022

Received 23 November 2017; Accepted 24 November 2017

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Conflicts of interest

None.

Trial registry number

N/A.

Guarantor

Zain Sobani will be the guarantor of the paper.

Research registration unique identifying number (UIN)

N/A.

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