JOURNAL OF CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL NEPHROLOGY (JCTN)

Editorial Open Access

Publishing clinical paper made easy

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'I do not know what to write' or 'I do not have any good topic to share'- This is the answer I often get when asked why isn't there an urge to publish. This is a common problem as most busy clinicians often cease reading scientific paper or journal to constantly update their knowledge. The reading habit appear to have ceased after MRCP/ M MED or Nephrology exit exam. As a matter of fact, everyone can write and publish, if you have your will.

Deciding on a topic

Each clinical case that we encounter per day form a unique case that cannot be duplicated. For example, most of us would assume that the publication of case report must be from a rare disorder, but on the contrary, rare manifestation of a common disorder is equally important. Similarly, it could be an experimental management of a common condition.

A quick way to see the relevant a topic that you intended to write if of course to discuss with your seniors or fellow colleague and to do a quick search in the PubMed or google scholar search engine. If the search of your intended topic result come out to less than 10, then it will be a topic of potential interest to the readers.

Which journal?

Do not publish in a predatory journal which are basically journal who will publish article without minor or without any external review with a price. Do published in journal that has index (Journal Citational Reports or Scopus) or any journal that is affiliated with professional bodies. You can refer to Beall's list of potential predatory scholarly open-access publishers and predatory journals.

What is citational index/reports?

Each year, millions of important scholarly works are published containing a wealth of information. Each citation made is a scientific connection created by the research community in an attempt to connect with each other research work. Each journal will be provided an index based on the number of citations made from the journal. This index will be renewed each year. Currently there is two reputable citational index which are the indexes from Journal Citational Reports (JCR) and Scopus. Scopus is more broad base and will cover include all the articles captured by the JCR, on the other hand JCR will only use certain journals listed inside Scopus for computation for the yearly impact factor of a journal.

What is impact factor?

The impact factor is a calculation method of the frequency of a "average article" of a particular journal has been cited in a particular year or period. The annual JCR impact factor is a ratio between citations and recent citable items published. The higher the impact factor, the more highly ranked the journal. It is one tool you can use to compare journals in a subject category. JCR has more vigorous method of capturing citations and it is further divided into 4 different Quartiles. Quartile (Q) rankings are derived for each journal in each of its subject categories according to number of citations it received per year. Q1 denotes the top 25% of the journals where it has received the most citations whereas Q4 the lowest position where it received 25% of total citations capture. Unfortunately, JCR is not open-access and are available by subscription only. However, most of the academic institutions do subscribe to their services. On the other hand, google scholar index is free but it is not as robust.

Why some journals are not index?

Indexed journals are considered to be of higher scientific quality as compared to non-indexed journals. However, some new journals like JCTN will not be indexed as this will take at least 2 years before any indexing sites such as PubMed can consider any journal to be listed in their search engine.

Decide on type of research paper

The format of your paper depends heavily on what type of paper you want to write. It also affects the type of research you use.

- Original research – case report, case series, research, interesting clinical picture, letter to editor

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- Review paper – qualitative, quantitative, systemic review

A good start is to start with case report with literature review as few of the higher impact journals still accept case report that has good teaching points. Alternatively, clinical images with good learning points can be submitted.

Research around the topic

Academic journals, databases, and books are a great source of information. It will be a good habit to take down notes as you read. Take the opportunity to have quick brain storming with seniors or fellow colleague over a meal or coffee break to see what is deficient in the literature or what is lacking in the region.

Know the required format.

Take time to familiarize the journal format as it varies from one to another. Start by putting up a cover page which include your main title, running title (often a shortened version of your main title), author's name, corresponding author detail is required.

Most of the journal a standard font such as Times New Roman or Arial 12-point in double space. This is not to be confused with a cover letter where the author outlined the importance of the research paper and convince the editor not to reject the paper outright but to send them for external reviews.

Outline your paper

A common standard for outlining research papers is to follow the sequence of Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results And Discussion method (1). The emphasis of the paper has to be in keeping with the aim of the journal. If a journal focus is publishing about clinical experiment, then case report or policy paper will not be interest to the editors.

Write the abstract.

An abstract can be structured into different subheadings or unstructured. It should accurately summarize the article by highlighting all the salient and learning points of the paper. It is usually between 250 – 350 words. Abstract provide the readers with information to help them decide if they will spend time read the entire document. Therefore, abstracts have to be broadly appealing and precise.

Write the introduction.

It is vital to have good introduction. This will be the place to provide basic background information and previous important trials have influenced the research, and how they will complement the current research. It will be useful to explain if there is any gap in knowledge that your paper will try to fill and this shall form the main objective of the paper.

Write the methodology

Define how you collected or generated data or whether you have obtained ethical committee approval for data collection. Describe how, where and which study participants are selected, and list down any inclusion or exclusion criteria. It is always useful to discuss with a statistician who is well verse in medical research which can assist in the methodology and calculating the sample size needed to provide enough power for the study. The methods have to be sufficiently detailed so that another researcher could precisely replicate the study. If instruments or assessment tools are employed, the paper should describe how these tools were developed, as well as provide a assessment of their validity and reliability. When submitting to a scholarly journal, be sure to include the complete detail on all instruments used. The methodology will not apply for case report, letter to editor or short communication.

Results

It will be ideal to present the results in simple writing, supplemented by tables and graphs. A clear text to guide reader to understand the results in tables or graphs is essential. The results must address the objective of the paper, and it does not really matter whether the result is significant or not. There is no need to discuss or explain the results at this point. It is advisable to make a dummy table before data analysis, so that all the important points will be addressed, whether the results significant or not.

Write the conclusion and discussion.

The author has to the reader what he has found, why it is relevant to the field, the limitation of the paper and what future studies could be done to further this research. As best as possible, do avoid repeating or contradicting information that has been stated elsewhere in the paper. You will need to rephrase or paraphrase information in your own words or if the information is copied, to prevent plagiarism.

Referencing

Reviewers always like up to date references. There are programs such as EndNote or Mendeley which can assist in finding the appropriate reference, inserting the citations in the appropriate place and in the recommended

citation style. The two most styles are Vancouver and APA (American Psychological Association) styles. APA is used by Education, Psychology, and Sciences journals whereas Vancouver is a numbered referencing style commonly used in medicine and science. It follows rules established by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, now maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine. It is also known as Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts submitted to Biomedical Journals.

Who owns the authorship?

Authorship recognize the contribution of the authors from the conception, data collection, drafting and leading to the publication of the paper. It carries with it significant academic implications. Being an author implies a collective responsibility and accountability for the published work. Some journals now request and publish information about the contributions of each author towards the paper.

To avoid confusion as to who should be name as authors, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has developed the following criteria for authorship that can be used by all journals, including those that distinguish authors from other contributors (2).

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

All those designated as authors should meet all four criteria for authorship, and all who meet the four criteria should be identified as authors. Those who do not meet all four criteria should be acknowledged instead.

What happen post submission?

First of all, the article will be screened by the editorial office to assess the suitability of the content as per the aims and scope of the journal. If the article is not written as per the journal format, then the editorial office will return the paper, a process term technical rejection.

Even if an article follows strictly the journal style, editorial rejection still can occur. The common reasons for editorial rejection are due to little significance of the research topic, research ethics ignorance, plagiarism or poor standard of English or writing. Once the article has passed the technical and editorial screening, then it will be sent for review. Common reasons for the reviewers to recommend rejection or major revision of the article when:

1. Research that are common and does not contribute new knowledge, i.e. 'Diabetic kidney disease is the top cause of chronic kidney disease', or Poor glyceamic control leads to renal progression'
2. Inappropriate methodology
3. Wrong or lack of statistical tests used
4. Data are incomplete or appears fabricated
5. Inaccurate or overclaim assumptions that are not supported by data

Once the article is recommended for rejection, then the journal will not accept the same article again. So, you will have no choice but to improve on the manuscript and submit to another journal.

Revising and resubmitting

Once your manuscript has gone through the editorial office then it will be sent to reviewers. You will receive a reply from the editor who handled your manuscript outlining the changes you will have to address as according to the reviewers' reports. You may be given the opportunity to revise it in accordance with the reviewers' comments. The changes have to be highlighted in colour text, or with Microsoft Word's Track Changes feature followed by point-by-point responses to the comments raised.

Each journal has a different revision deadline which vary from as little as two weeks to as long as six months. If you do not think you will be able to return a revised manuscript within the time frame, then you should write in to the editor to request for an extension. Personally, it is advisable to perform the revision as soon as possible as the chances of getting the same reviewers to go through the revised paper will be higher. Remember the reviewers do the appraisal for free and they are generally busy lot of people and they certainly can refuse to review again. If that is the case, then the revised article will be send to new reviewer who may advise additional corrections. It is imperative that if the reviewer provides a negative comment, you must never let your ego get in the way. One must be courteous and thank the reviewers and editors for their valuable comments. If you disagree with the reviewers' comments, then politely offer a solid and scientific rebuttal. If your rebuttal make sense, the reviewers will likely accept your explanation.

Have courage and determination

Some vouched that writing paper is worth than having a renal colic child yet some says it is a piece of cake. This has some truth in the sense that acceptance for publication is highly variable between authors. A good author will read in anticipation of the requirement of the journal. In

today fast paced world, few people will read past your title if the article is not 'attractive' enough. Well, those who has courage and determination to start writing and to be humble enough to be perceptive to the editor and reviewers' comments will surely have a higher rate of success. A complete overview of the process of submission until publication is illustrated in figure 1. Nevertheless, we must develop good discipline and allocate a portion of our time for research and publications. Most importantly, one must have fun in the whole process!

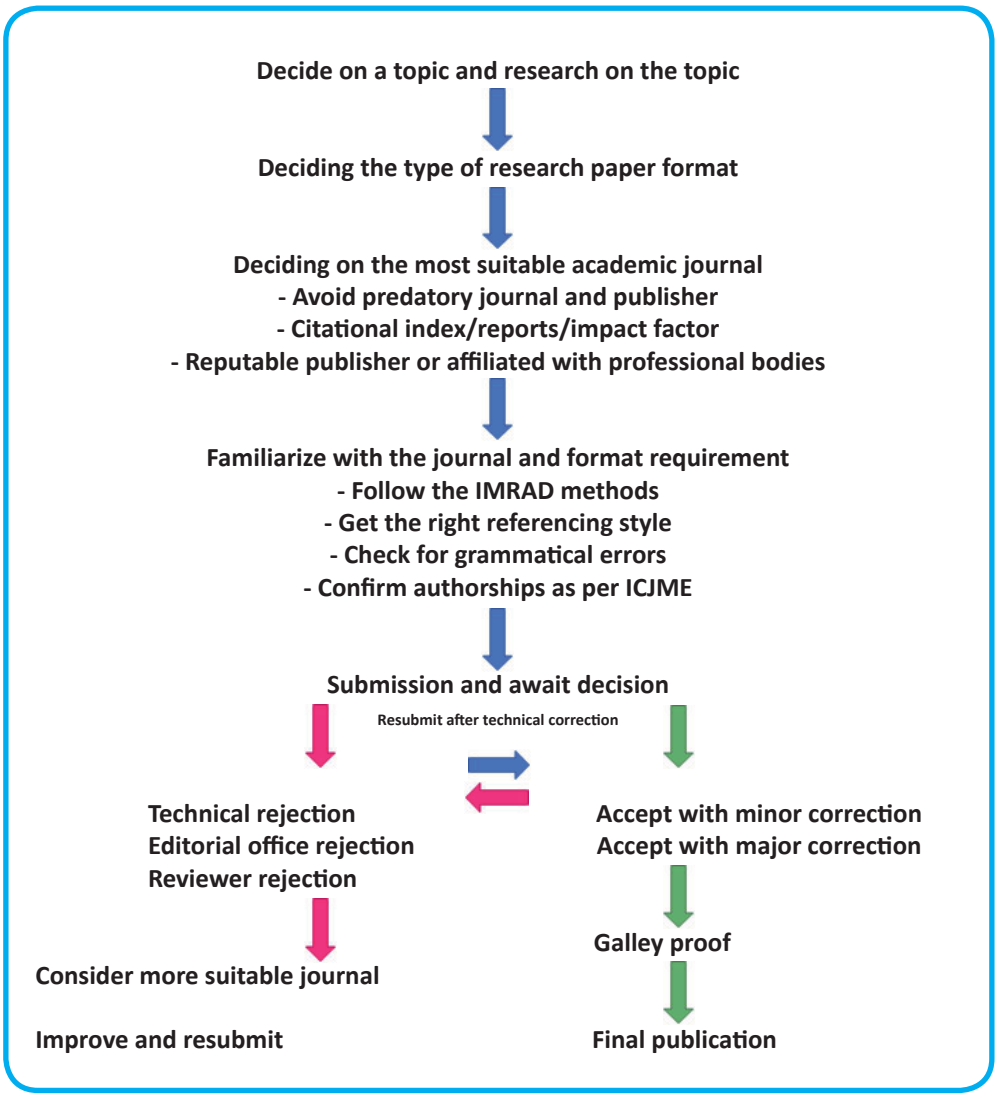

Figure 1: Flow chart of manuscript writing until publication

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