Successfully Navigating Peer-Reviewed Publishing: Recommendations for First-time Authors

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Phoebe Thorpe

DISCLAIMER

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The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the CDC or ASPPH.
EVALUATION OF THE PRESENTATION

Please complete the four-question paper evaluation for today’s presentation on the table
PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Present reflection questions
- Review benefits of publishing
- Outline process of publishing and provide recommendations
- Lead group activities and discussion
Peer-reviewed

Published by scientific journal

Found on PubMed, Scopus, or another bibliography database
EVALUATION REPORT

- Non-peer-reviewed
- Shared with stakeholders
- Posted online
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Have you published? Specifically, evaluation work?
- What barriers have you faced when publishing your work?
- What resources did you use to overcome those barriers?
- What support is needed to achieve your publishing goals?
BENEFITS OF PUBLISHING

- **Individual**
  - Career advancements
  - Increased productivity
  - Professional development
  - Increased self-efficacy and self-esteem
  - Fulfill professional requirements
  - Earn continuing education
BENEFITS OF PUBLISHING

- **Field**\(^{2,5,6}\)
  - Advancement
  - Generalizability of the literature
  - Improve quality of science and standard of care
PUBLISHING

- Journal selection
- Cover letter
- Key word selection
- Response to editors’ and peer-reviewers’ comments
JOURNAL SELECTION

- Journal selection ideally occurs before majority of writing
  - Usually while developing the outline because journal requirements and format will help guide the direction of the manuscript

- Strategies to identify possible journals
  - Organize your literature review by journal
  - Use your coauthors and professional network and memberships
  - Identify affiliated journals with your institution or organization
ARTICLE TYPES BEYOND ORIGINAL RESEARCH

- Book reviews
- Case studies
- Commentary
- Data papers
- Editorials
- Notes from the field
- Opinions
- Perspectives

- Policy analysis
- Review articles
- Student papers
- Supplementary articles
- Tips of the trade
- Tools or techniques
- Video papers
JOURNAL’S WEBSITE AND AUTHOR GUIDELINES

- Information about journal’s aims and target audience
- Specifics about article type options along with detailed information and requirements for format and style
JOURNAL SELECTION

- Considerations to narrow down journal options
  - Indexed?
  - Peer-reviewed?
  - Subscription or open-access?
  - Processing fees paid by authors?
  - Something new and different to the journal?

- Send a 1–2 paragraph summary to the editors for review
  - Provides insight from the editors but does not guarantee acceptance or commitment to submit the manuscript to that specific journal
- Journal selected
- Reviewed author guidelines
- Manuscript written
Journal selection and initial submission → Response from journal → Revise and resubmit → Accepted

Cycle arrow points back to Response from journal
- Author guidelines
- Cover letter
- Key words
- Opportunity to identify reviewers
- Last questions before hitting submit
AUTHOR GUIDELINES

“If you do not follow the general guidelines and requirements outlined below, your manuscript will be returned.”

- Specifications and requirements for format and style
  - Abstract requirements
  - Authorship
  - Font and size, page spacing
  - Headers, footers, subtitles
  - Order of sections
  - Reference style and limit
  - Tables or figures
  - Word or character count
COVER LETTER

- Address to the journal editors
- Write no more than one page
- Include paper’s title, institution affiliation, submission type, your request for publication
- Briefly review problem or rationale for the paper
- Highlight significance to the field and relevance to the journal’s audience
KEY WORDS

- Title, abstract, and key words are often the only parts of the paper accessible freely online\(^7\)
- Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms for key words helps standardize and index articles
- MeSH Browser
  - Search tool for finding relevant MeSH terms
- MeSH on Demand
  - Identifies potential MeSH terms from text
GROUP ACTIVITY: KEY WORDS

“Adolescent awareness and use of electronic cigarettes: A review of emerging trends and findings.”

– Greenhill R, Dawkins L, Notley C, Finn MD, Turner JJ.

Key words
GROUP ACTIVITY: KEY WORDS

“Adolescent awareness and use of electronic cigarettes: A review of emerging trends and findings.”

- Greenhill R, Dawkins L, Notley C, Finn MD, Turner JJ.

Key words identified by journal:

- Adolescents
- E-cigarettes
- Electronic cigarettes
- Nicotine
- Vaping
OPPORTUNITY TO IDENTIFY REVIEWERS

- Provides an opportunity for authors to suggest preferred reviewers and nonpreferred reviewers

- Identify colleagues in the field that are not coauthors or collaborators on the paper

- Consult with coauthors about who they would recommend
LAST QUESTIONS

- Are you exceeding word or character limits?
- Has each element (manuscript, tables, figures) of the submission been labeled and uploaded correctly?
- Are the references up to date and cited correctly?
- Do you have the current titles, credentials, officiations, and contact information for each coauthor?
- Accept
- Reject
- Revise and resubmit
ACCEPT

- Outright acceptances are RARE
REJECT

- Common reasons for rejection
  - Incomplete submission
  - Outside the scope of the journal
  - Poor writing
  - Duplicated or plagiarized work
  - Issues with methods, design, or interpretation of results
  - Lacked significance to the field
# REJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common reasons</th>
<th>Tools to avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete submission</td>
<td>Author guidelines and last questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside journal’s scope</td>
<td>Email to editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor writing</td>
<td>Writing resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with methods, analysis, or interpretation of results</td>
<td>Work with coauthors or colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacked significance to the field</td>
<td>Email to editor and cover letter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REVISE AND RESUBMIT

- Majority of journal responses
REVISE AND RESUBMIT

- Translation, the journal is interested and invested
- Read the review and put it away
WHEN TO REPLY

- Half the amount of time it took to hear back from journal
- Must balance fast turnaround with quality of response
- Editors want authors to thoughtfully respond to review
EXECUTING PEER-REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS$^{9-11}$

- **Know your priorities**
  - Editor’s comments trump all peer-reviewers

- **Make all the easy and obvious changes**

- **Follow the recommendations unless they make the paper substantially worse or wrong**

- **Address conflicting comments**
  - Any mutually exclusive recommendations from reviewers, choose the one you agree with, and justify your choice
CRAFTING YOUR RESPONSE

- Use track changes to make all revisions easily identifiable
  - Able to submit a clean and tracked version of paper

- Be courteous and respectful to editors and reviewers
  - Have a trusted colleague review both revised paper and response letter before submitting to journal
  - Do not be afraid to take a stance when needed

- Format
  - Cut and copy every comments received by reviewers into a new document and address each comment individually
PARAGRAPH FORMAT

Reviewer: 1

The author(s) are to be complimented on desire to use the Ebola Virus Disease epidemics in West Africa as an illustrative Case Study of the Global Health Security Agenda’s (GHSA) surveillance Action Packages/Targets within the “Detect” pillar of the GHSA’s “Prevent-Detect-Respond” triad.

We would like to thank Reviewer 1 for their review and recommendations.

The following are comments on the overall manuscript:

1. The GHSA is not mentioned at all in the abstract and not until the last sentence of the Introduction with no lead-in context. Hence, it makes the objective one that would only be immediately understood by a reader very familiar with the GHSA.

Both the IHR and GHSA are now more prominently featured within the abstract. The abstract has been revised to better reflect the content of the manuscript.
TABLE FORMAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewers’ comment</th>
<th>Authors’ response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The GHSA is not mentioned at all in the abstract. Hence, it makes the objective one that would only be immediately understood by a reader very familiar.</td>
<td>We would like to thank Reviewer 1 for their recommendations and review. We did everything you asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment 2</td>
<td>Response 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GROUP ACTIVITY: CRAFTING A RESPONSE

“Public health surveillance: At the core of the Global Health Security Agenda.”

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SUMMARY

- Control what you can when submitting a manuscript
- Take advantage of the resources provided by others
- Be brave and reach out for the support you need

Questions?
Sara Beth Wolicki, ASPPH/CDC Fellow
Email: klx6@cdc.gov
REFERENCES

Photos: https://unsplash.com/

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

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