

THE URGE TO WRITE

Creditable motives

- a creative spirit
- sharing your discoveries
- advancement of science
- support institution, colleagues, self

Less creditable motives

- self-importance
- 'political' ends
- verbal diarrhoea
- publish or perish

PREPARATION OF A CLINICAL PAPER

1. *Choose your material*

- randomised controlled trial
- prospective study
- retrospective case series
- laboratory/experimental work
- case report
- technical note

PREPARATION OF A CLINICAL PAPER

2. Select your journal carefully

- does it publish this type of article?
- what is its prestige/citation index?
- does it have word limits?
- adopt the correct house style
- follow 'instructions to authors' precisely

TYPES OF PAPER

Leading articles should be:

- invited
- topical
- authoritative
- short
- sparsely referenced

TYPES OF PAPER

Review articles* should be:

- **submitted (but check beforehand)**
- **comprehensive but not exhaustive**
- **up-to-date**
- **liberally referenced**
- **balanced, but give your own spin**

* **good for citation index, popular with readers**

TYPES OF PAPER

Original articles should be:

- original
- justifiable (message, novelty)
- appropriately short (avoid repetition)
- carefully planned and checked

TYPES OF PAPER

*Case reports** should be:

- properly justified
- as short as possible
- fascinating
- well illustrated

* Avoid the format 'case report and review of literature'

PREPARATION OF A CLINICAL PAPER

3. Writing the manuscript

- **start with Methods and Results**
- **clear presentation of numerical data**
- **follow with Discussion and Introduction**
- **Abstract / Summary needs special care**
- **refs, title page, keywords, ackn^s**

WRITING THE MANUSCRIPT

Patients and Methods

- check demographic data thoroughly
- consider subheadings
- describe fully / validate any new method
- refer to established methods (your lab)
- statistical analysis (? seek advice)

NB: Flawed methodology can scupper the paper

WRITING THE MANUSCRIPT

Art work

- avoid too many tables
- have figures professionally drawn
- consider arrows, colour plates etc.
- take care with legends (figures and tables)
- label and orientate figures

WRITING THE MANUSCRIPT

Results

- subheadings usually required
- data in tables and/or figures?
- do not repeat data in text
- be sparing with *P* values in text
- double check the mathematics

WRITING THE MANUSCRIPT

Discussion

- start with most important finding
- orderly progression of paragraphs
- do not present results for the first time
- interpret, not recapitulate, the results
- do not over-interpret your data
- round things off but avoid long conclusion

WRITING THE MANUSCRIPT

Introduction

- difficult to write
- give background succinctly
- avoid same phraseology as Discussion
- end by 'setting up' the study

WRITING THE MANUSCRIPT

Abstract / Summary

- often the only portion read
- should be structured
- give hard data not waffle
- follow instructions carefully

WRITING THE MANUSCRIPT

Title page

- **title/running title**
- **authors: names, titles, degrees**
- **institute, address, country**
- **keywords often required**
- **corresponding author**
- **date of manuscript**

WRITING THE MANUSCRIPT

References

- avoid excess in original article but ...
- be comprehensive in review article
- follow house style slavishly
- check numerical order versus text

PREPARATION OF A CLINICAL PAPER

4. The phase of checking

- get someone else to criticise
- shorten MS wherever possible
- double check for typos
- check the numbers and references

NB: Shoddy presentation condemns a borderline MS

THE FATE OF A SCIENTIFIC PAPER

Accepted

- up-to-date
- important
- novel contribution
- a pleasure to read
- free of errors
- short and clear

Rejected

- study already done
- not worth the candle
- re-hash of old stuff
- a penance to read
- sloppy mistakes
- tedious and opaque

WRITING AND PUBLISHING

Seven peccadilloes

- use of dreadful English
- salami publication
- garbage statistics
- way over length
- wrong referencing
- too many tables / figures
- hopeless abstract

PROFESSOR HIGGINS'S BLEAT

Why can't the English teach their children how to speak?
Norwegians learn Norwegian, the Greeks are taught their Greek,
But use proper English you're regarded as a freak –
Oh why can't the English learn to speak?

Alan Jay Lerner
My Fair Lady



WRITING AND PUBLISHING

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WRITING AND PUBLISHING

Seven deadly sins

- plagiarism
- falsifying data
- reporting unethical work
- not obtaining co-authors' consent
- elementary mathematical errors
- complete disregard for house style
- boring the reader stiff

POSTSCRIPT

If your paper is accepted

- celebrate judiciously
- in due course check proofs carefully

If your paper is rejected

- do not despair
- rethink, rewrite and resubmit elsewhere