

# Giving what journals want & getting what you want

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# Avoiding rejection

# Common reasons for rejection

- \* Poor English usage.
- \* Replicative, confirmatory, or localized findings
- \* Causation ascribed to associations
- \* Poorly contextualized results

# English usage

- \* English is a difficult language
  - \* Scientific vocabulary and usage can be idiosyncratic and archaic
- \* Attempt to enlist the help of a native English speaker
- \* Professional editors specializing in technical English
  - \* Can be expensive
- \* Establish links to individuals and organizations that already publish in English
  - \* UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, etc.

# Novelty

- \* Replicative and confirmatory results, while important, are generally not published in top journals
- \* Findings from a specific local population might be most useful to a local audience

# Correlational data

- \* JAH publishes very few studies that are based only on correlational or cross-sectional data
- \* In most cases, longitudinal data is necessary to inform interventions and clinical work
- \* Associations, correlations, and prevalence are nearly always most useful to a local or regional audience

# Poorly contextualized results

- \* Emerging research from LMICs is interesting to an international audience if it is properly contextualized
  - \* Describe the local context and how it relates to the results
  - \* The dilemma is well-described in PA Michaud's JAH editorial, "The International Journal of Adolescent Health," JAH 2010;42:421-422.
- \* Same dilemma occurs in papers from HICs

Defining the key messages, contribution &  
audience of your planned article

# Message and contribution of the article

Try to focus on 2–3 messages or takeaways

- \* Theoretical contribution
- \* Focus on behavior and predictors of behavior
- \* Methodological contributions
- \* Clinical focus
- \* Public health or policy

# Audience for the message

- \* Healthcare providers
- \* Researchers
- \* Methodologists
- \* Which journals have you cited?
- \* Regional, national, or international?

# Choosing the type of article to write

# Article types

- \* Review articles
- \* Full length empirical articles
- \* Brief reports
- \* Case studies or observational reports
- \* Editorials, commentaries, and letters

# Writing the article

# The structure of a scientific article

## Section I: Introduction — Progress from the general to the specific

Present the general subject or problem

Review the literature

Statement of hypothesis:

Your argument in the context of other work

What is the aim of the study? ***What is the point of all this??***

# The structure of a scientific article

## Section II: Methods

Design

Sample

Context and setting

Materials and Instruments

Validity and reliability

Protocols and IRB

# The structure of a scientific article

## Section III: Presenting the data — From the specific to the general

Results: Describe the findings

Discussion: Place the research in the context of other work

Limitations: Do not be afraid

Conclusion: Application of the results; implications for future research; “Main Message” for clinicians/researchers/administrators/policymakers

Works cited/References

# Possible structures of a commentary

- \* Statement and support
- \* Question and answer
- \* Problem and solution
- \* Cause and effect
- \* Sequence
- \* Description or partition
- \* Comparison or contrast
- \* Definition
- \* Example or analogy
- \* Signpost – introduction, conclusion

# Choosing a Journal

# Choosing the journal that is right for you

with thanks to PLOS



# Dos and don'ts of journal selection

with thanks to PLOS

## Dos

- Take the time to investigate options that may be new to you
- Choose your first and second choice journals with care, taking the needs of your readers and funders for this specific study into account, as well as the type of article you've written, and journal scope and requirements
- Watchout for potential predatory journals that charge fees without offering reliable peer review  
Discuss your needs and priorities with your coauthors and achieve consensus about your submission choice

## Don't

- Submit the same study to more than one journal at the same time  
Submit to journals that do not publish your type of study or article
- Just submit to the most prestigious journals in order (e.g., top general science journals, top journals in discipline, others)

# Writing the Article

# Telling a good story

- \* Good research question
- \* Rigorous design, good response, clean data
- \* Clear and reliable analysis
- \* Abstract to Discussion



Getting noticed

# Cover Letter

- \* Check instructions
- \* Often this is the first part the editor sees
- \* Make it clear how and why the study is important
- \* Explain why the manuscript is important for this journal
- \* List other publications cited in journal
- \* Identify your similar or related publications or submitted manuscripts

# The Abstract: A Tool for Success

- \* Solving problems
  - \* Clarify your thoughts
  - \* Distill those thoughts and ideas
  - \* Identify the most important
- \* Connecting with editors
- \* Getting reviewed
- \* Getting found
- \* Getting read
- \* Getting cited

# Revising Your Manuscript Submission

# To revise or not to revise

- \* Virtually never accept first drafts
- \* Revision letter is an indication of interest
- \* Revision increases odds of eventual publication
- \* Must revise to resubmit elsewhere
- \* May see the same reviewer at another journal
- \* Review process is didactic; improves the paper

# Approaching the revisions

- \* Distancing strategy
- \* But be prompt
- \* Respond with a clear and constructive revision and response letter
- \* Respond to all comments
  - \* Be systematic; a table format is helpful
  - \* Juxtapose divergent comments
  - \* Revision process is a conversation amongst peers

# The revision letter

<p>* The literature review is very brief and doesn't tell us much. Even in the absence of longitudinal literature, what is the speculation about possible pathways? See the Lewis et al article about the intervening role of internalizing symptoms. There is some discussion of pathways in the discussion but more is needed. (Reviewer 2)</p>	<p>The literature review and Discussion have been expanded to address these issues.</p>
<p>* Also, parental smoking is never mentioned as a confounding factor (and a possible correlate of maltreatment?). (Reviewer 2)</p> <p>* Do the authors have a measure of parental cigarette smoking or substance use? It would probably be helpful to include such a measure as a covariate if so. (Reviewer 3)</p>	<p>Parental smoking is not available in the dataset, which is noted as a limitation. We considered adding a measure of parental substance use, but opted against doing so because we are not convinced this variable is a particularly relevant covariate for our analyses.</p>
<p><b>METHODS</b></p>	
<p>*The authors refer to multiple measures (e.g., physical abuse; SES) as "standardized." How were they standardized? Clearly, they are not z-scores. (Reviewer 1)</p> <p>*The maltreatment measures could use a little more detail. (Reviewer 2)</p> <p>* The nature of the physical abuse measure could be better described. For instance, why does the measure range from a negative to a positive score? Was it standardized, etc.? Please describe in more depth how it was created (Reviewer 3)</p>	<p>Details of the measures used in the study have been added.</p>

# Resubmit

- \* Checklist of documents necessary for revision
  - \* Response letter
  - \* Revised manuscript
  - \* Revised tables and figures
- \* Re-review by editors and/or original reviewers
- \* Final acceptance at editor's discretion