



## The Criteria Considered in Preparing Manuscripts for Submission to Biomedical Journals

Zahra Ghahramani<sup>1\*</sup>, Golnoosh Mehrabani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Trauma Research Center, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran.

<sup>2</sup>Student Research Committee, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran.

**Corresponding author:** Zahra Ghahramani

Address: Trauma Research Center, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran.

Tel: +98-711-6360697 Fax: +98-711-6254206

e-mail: zghahreman@sums.ac.ir

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Most of the manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals are rejected or needs minor or major revisions. Acceptance or rejection rate of manuscripts is different in the journals. A few of manuscripts will be accepted while the majority is rejected. The primary rejection of a manuscript by editors or editorial board of a journal is when it does not comply with the Aim and Scope of the journal, or if it is not suitable for peer review. The reasons being due to short discussion, inadequate illustrations, inferior quality of the figures, and lacking new information added to the previous research.

The rejection rate mostly depends on ranking of the journal and it is usually higher than 50%. It is therefore of paramount importance to understand the reasons for rejection of a manuscript, a process crucial to improve the quality of future work [1].

The following provides guidelines for improving the quality of manuscripts and describes reasons for rejection of articles in order to prevent their refusal by the biomedical journals.

### Common Reasons

**1. Instruction for Authors:** Before submitting a

manuscript to a journal, always read the Instruction to Authors of the journals. Remember not to send a manuscript to a journal with the format of other journals.

**2. Spelling, Grammar, Typographic errors:** Normally manuscripts have some spelling, grammar and typographic errors which impact the decisions and comments made by the editors and reviewers of the journals concerned. Before submitting a manuscript, check the language spelling, Grammar and Typographic errors.

**3. Submission to more than one journal:** Do not submit your manuscript to more than one journal at the same time, a practice unacceptable to a peer review journal.

**4. Novelty:** Prepare a manuscript based on novelty to improve, and add new information to previous findings.

**5. Aim of the Study:** The research goal should be clear, pertinent and achievable. Study design and methodology should be accurate and results presented correctly [2].

**6. Plagiarism:** Do not quote the exact sentences and phrases of other references, and use your own writing when referring to the work of other authors.

**7. Same subject:** If you use the same statement from

a manuscript, the reasons should be completely clear.

**8.** Do not omit the proper references.

**9.** Always state the conflict of interest, acknowledgement, and source of funding, if any [2]

**10. Discussion:** Discussion should be rich in details. Make sure about the reliability of your statements. A key part of the discussion is to compare your results with other published studies.

**11. Research project:** A research should be clear, concise, focused, complete and arguable to cover the expectations in aim and scope of the project. To achieve the above mention goals in a research, an interesting topic should be chosen, a pilot study should be undertaken to be attractive for the readers and it should cover all the questions and our hypothesis.

### Original Article

- ▶ Methodology/Study design and procedures must be transparent. Any flaws and ambiguities in methodology and study design, makes the results questionable and the research will not be acceptable by high caliber journal [3].
- ▶ Lack of appropriate data analysis and interpretation: Many papers suffer appropriate data analysis because of badly statistical justifications. Choosing the test most appropriate for data analysis would help a fruitful data interpretation. Deciding which statistical test to be used is of great importance. Specifying the type of statistical analysis, sample size and the value for test significance ( $p$  value) would be necessary to reach an acceptable result. When you list statistical details in the text, writing the mean and standard deviation seems necessary. The discussion and outcome presented in a manuscript should be precise and compelling.
- ▶ Improper rational: The presentation of appropriate data and information would reinforce the rational of a research project. In methods section, we should describe the hypothesis tested. Points to be included in methods section are summarized in Table 1 [4].
- ▶ State the exact tests and the software and the version used for data analysis.
- ▶ The description of study design should be succinct, especially if it involves groups, events and comparison between groups.
- ▶ The readers should know how the participants were chosen. In a laboratory study, you must describe the source and strain of animals, bacteria, other items and raw materials used [4].
- ▶ In results section, the data should be supported by appropriate tables. Remember that many readers tend to skip the text and read part of it. They prefer to look for tables and figures, therefore it is important that tables and figures to be informative and have strong visual impact [4]

**Table 1.** What to include in methods section.

#### How the study was designed

- \* Keep the description brief
- \* Using the names to know parts of a study sequence

#### How the data were analyzed

- \* Use the  $p$ -value to decline the null hypothesis
- \* Give an estimate of the study power

#### How the study was performed

- \* State how the participants were chosen
- \* Give reasons for excluding participants
- \* Give precise details of materials used
- \* Give accurate dosage of drugs
- \* Consider and state the ethical features
- \* Give the exact form of treatment

#### Statistical Analysis

- \* Give the exact test used and version

### Case Report

- ▶ In preparing a case report, it is important to state why it is worth publishing.
- ▶ Describe whether the case is rare or not, because rarity is often cited as the reason for reporting a particular case report. A previously unreported presentation and unusual manifestation of a common disease is of interest and publishable [4].
- ▶ State if the case report is associated with disease and mention the reason for its presentation.
- ▶ Consider the outcome of a novel treatment such as that of a fatal disease.
- ▶ Sometimes a new disease is reported which is most relevant for publication.
- ▶ In many cases you need to choose a special journal to submit your manuscript.
- ▶ The structure of a case report should include abstract, introduction, case report or case presentation and discussion.
- ▶ The consent of patient concerned is necessary for publishing a case report.

Table 2 shows the reasons for rejection of a manuscript by a journal [5] and Table 3 specifies the essential features of a good manuscript.

**Table 2.** Reasons for Rejection.

Item no.	Reasons for Rejection
1	Old Knowledge
2	Poor quality of Images
3	Wrong and incorrect interpretations
4	Methodological errors
5	Poor study design and illustrations
6	Previously published article
7	Inadequate sample size and biased sample
8	Good written but for local information, it is better to publish the data in a local or specific journal, too
9	Language Barrier
10	Poor written sentences
11	Failure to follow journal's instruction for authors
12	Poor statistics
13	Inadequate illustration of Discussion

**Table 3.** Essential features of a good manuscript.

Item no.	Essential features
1	Specific goal and time of the study
2	Having the Ethical Approval
3	Good methodology/study design
4	Good statistical Analysis
5	Appropriate and correct interpretation of Data
6	Good figures/illustrations
7	Appropriate use of language/grammar

Manuscripts submitted to a peer review journal maybe rejected for different reasons [6]. Nearly two fifth of reviewers recommend the rejection of a manuscript but provide written comments for authors. Without such comments neither editors nor authors understand the reasons for recommended rejection of a manuscript. Some weaknesses in manuscripts can be addressed by re-writing or re-analyzing the data. However, certain deficiencies are fatal to some manuscripts. Authors and researchers need to pay attention to good writing and well-crafted manuscripts, appropriate statistics and high quality interpretation of data [7].

The principal features for accepting a manuscript are the expertise in writing in a specific field, excellent writing and quality of study design and methodology [6]. Many peer-review journals expect the reviewers to assess the manuscripts based on credibility and scientific values of submitted manuscript. Scientific writing needs a reasonable knowledge of science and good writing. Common deficits include small and biased sample size, and poor English grammar. It is important to clearly define the questions raised in connection with the study as well providing a transparent study design and procedures. [4].

### Manuscript Acceptability

1. Give a clear and honest interpretation of the results.
2. Use appropriate and, as far as possible, simplified statistical software and statistical tests. [4].
3. Recheck the manuscripts for any missing data and information [1].
4. Make all changes regarding the referees' comments [1].
5. Figures and Tables should be in compliance with style of the journals, instructions to authors and easy to comprehend.
6. Make sure that the conclusion will answer the questions raised in the study.
7. Provide clear and genuine results to increase the chances of a manuscript to be accepted.
8. Methodology and study design and procedures must be clear [3].

9. Make sure to provide alternative illustration in conclusion [6].

10. Revise your manuscript according to the reviewers' comments.

### Reasons to Reject a Case Report

- \* Case Report is not unique
- \* Conclusion is incomplete and the final outcome are not provided
- \* Final diagnosis is not provided
- \* The progress of injury is confusing
- \* Appropriate medical terminology are not used
- \* Information of structure heading is not provided

### Reasons to Reject a Review Article

- \* Poor description of a study; The Editor-in-Chief perspective of a specific review article is a determining factor for accepting a manuscript.
- \* Inadequate literature review
- \* Poor data interpretation
- \* Duplication of other data and not adding new information to previously published report
- \* Poor English quality
- \* Exceeding the journal's word limit
- \* Providing up to date references and avoids citing old references.
- \* Citing irrelevant inappropriate references [3]
- \* Including your own references in your last published articles in the same field
- \* When submitting a manuscript to a high caliber journal, it should compete with other high quality papers in a comparable field [8]

The following are to be considered when a manuscript with reviewers' comments is returned to an author for revision and re-submission [9]:

- ▶ Read the editors suggestion carefully
- ▶ Read the reviewer's comments, Make a list of all suggestions and comments of editors and reviewers
- ▶ Read your manuscript, highlight the sections to be revised, and answer the following questions:
  - Are research projects beneficial?
  - Does the literature review support the research questions?
  - Does methodology provide adequate information?
  - Is statistical analysis and tests relevant to research project?
  - Is data analysis correct and amenable to reasonable interpretation?
  - Does discussion of the paper reflect findings of the study precisely?
  - Does discussion contain a relevant conclusion?
- ▶ Having reviewed and revised the manuscript,

make sure that changes you have made are in accordance with the comments of editors and reviewers.

- ▶ If you disagree with editor and reviewers comments, state your reasons.
- ▶ Read your manuscript a couple of times and ask a colleague to read it for you and give comments.
- ▶ When your article is revised and ready, it is very important to re-submit it along with a covering letter to Editor-in-Chief, explaining the changes you have made to the manuscript.
- ▶ Conclude the letter by thanking the editor for providing you with the opportunity to re-submit your manuscript.

▶ Even if the manuscript is rejected, it would be a good practice to write to the editor and give your feed back. Most of the above problems can be avoided if the research paper is well written. Therefore, from editors and reviewers perspective, the originality and reliability of a research is of great value. In addition, informative nature of a study along with a sound interpretation of the results, appropriate data analysis, and clear outcome of a study are prominent entities, which secure publication of a manuscript in a prestigious biomedical journal.

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