Become a Healthcare Journal Author or Reviewer: A Panel Discussion

November 2016
National Harbor, MD
Become an Author/Reviewer

- AMSUS Annual Meeting, November 29, 2016, National Harbor, MD
  - William H.J. Haffner, MD, Editor
  - Steve Rothwell, Ph.D., Associate Editor
  - Melvin Lessing, PharmD, Assistant Editor
  - Laura Talbot, RN, PhD, EdD, Associate Editor
  - Tonya Lira, Managing Editor
Session Objectives:

At the conclusion of this Discussion, the participant will be able to:

• Understand the importance of publishing our work
• Select the most appropriate format for presenting our investigation
• Describe several key steps in the preparation and submission of a manuscript
• Relate constructively to the peer review process
  • As an author
  • As a peer reviewer
Become an Author/Reviewer

The opinions or assertions contained in this presentation are the personal views of the presenters and are not to be construed as official or as reflecting the views of any federal health agency or of AMSUS.
This session builds on our collective views based upon –
 • Evaluations from previous presentations
 • Number of years of experience as members of the Editorial Board and Journal Staff
 • Significant numbers of publications
 • Personal reflections
 • But, these views are personal observations and have not been approved by DOD, DHHS, or VA
Military Medicine

• Objectives of this Journal –
  • Promote awareness of federal medicine, especially -
    • Operational medicine (e.g., military, natural disaster response)
    • Applied public health
    • Veterans’ health
    • Other relevant medical/health related topics of interest to the broad range of AMSUS members
Military Medicine

• Objectives of this Journal –
  • Provide a forum for responsible discussion of common ideas and problems related to federal and international health
  • Provide an historic, fully searchable reference file for published lessons learned over many years of operational medicine and applied public health
Military Medicine

• Mission –
  • Increase healthcare research and education by providing peer-reviewed scientific and other relevant information to its readers
  • Facilitate communication within and across fields
  • Provide a prestige publication for members’ writings
Why publish?

• Invaluable process of
  • formulating an answerable question
  • reviewing pertinent literature
  • gathering and evaluating data
  • drawing conclusions based upon the results
  • discussing their significance

• Advancing knowledge

• Information sharing - dissemination

• Provide outcomes basis for changes in military/federal healthcare policies or practices
Why publish?

• Provide a searchable, referenced record of findings
• Promotion and/or career advancement
  • Academic
    • Curriculum vitae enhancement
    • Supplement current experts in field
  • Uniformed services
    • Fitness reports
    • Contribution to the effectiveness of the “team”
• Personal/professional curiosity
• Mentoring/transferring of “corporate knowledge”
Steve:
Selecting best type of article for a journal or best journal for your article

• Know the journal – For *Military Medicine*:

• Feature Articles and Brief Reports: original contributions
  • Data-driven or methods-based studies
  • Complete reports of up to 4,000 words or 3,000 words, plus a Structured Summary (abstract) of 250-500 words (see Guidelines for Authors for specific requirements)
  • Reasonable number of tables, figures, references
  • Address new topics in full
Feature Article or Brief Report

- Presents new research findings, data from pilot studies, worthwhile replication studies, or therapeutic interventions
- Important to consider, as appropriate
  - Ethical issues
  - IRB approval requirements
  - Study design
  - Statistical analysis
  - Discussion and conclusions
  - Local clearance processes
Selecting Best Type of Article

- **Brief Reports**
  - Up to 3,000 words, plus Structured Summary of 250-500 words
  - Often a report of preliminary findings

- **Case Reports with reviews of the historical literature**
  - Fewer than 3,000 words, plus Structured Summary of 250-500 words
  - How is this case different or unique?
Selecting best type of article

• Review Articles
  • Integrate already published data to add new relevance
  • See Guidelines for Authors for specific requirements

• Guest Editorials / Perspectives
  • Fewer than 2,000 words, no abstract, limited number of references, no tables
  • Commentary on contemporary issues

• Letters to the editor
  • Fewer than 1000 words, no abstract, “references available upon request”
  • Generally in reaction to a published article, with a response invited from original author
Experiences of authors, reviewers, and editors

• An ego building or an ego bruising process!
  • Sometimes our best work is rejected
  • But, less important work may sometimes be accepted
• “Reviewer roulette”
Development of articles for a variety of healthcare audiences

- Essential to follow the specific published Guidelines for Authors for a given journal
- Write to a general healthcare audience. *Military Medicine* is a mainstream professional journal whose readers come from all biomedical and healthcare disciplines.
- The Structured Summary should be a synopsis of the manuscript. It should not serve as an introduction to the paper.
Development of articles for a variety of health care audiences

- Avoid overly lengthy introductions. The introduction should provide just enough background so the reader can appreciate the context of the main body.
- Avoid or minimize use of acronyms and abbreviations. In most cases they obscure instead of clarify.
- Use only abbreviations and acronyms that are readily retrieved through a quick literature search.
- Define each acronym or abbreviation the first time it is used.
Development of articles for a variety of health care audiences

- Conclusions must match the data presented in a precise fashion.

- Scientific manuscripts should never be in the form of
  - a military after-action report
  - a governmental briefing
  - or a podium PowerPoint presentation.
Laura:
Format - Preparing the Original/Feature Report manuscript

• Cover page – includes standard information such as key words and contact information

• Structured Summary of 250-500 words
  • State what is really important about the study
  • Accessible through PubMed and other search engines
  • Consistency with the manuscript!
  • Accuracy, clarity, clarity, clarity!
  • Appears in print and on-line versions of the Journal
Format: Preparing the manuscript

- Introduction/Background
- Methods/Data collection
- Results
  - Graphs/figures versus tables
  - Tables versus text
  - Well-selected image or two
    - Visualize how these will look when reduced in print in black and white format in print, color on-line
- Provide sufficient detail for the reader to understand and even replicate the data analysis, but avoid excessive detail
Format: Preparing the manuscript

• Statistical analysis, as appropriate
  • Based upon study design
  • P value significance – implies an hypothesis
  • Sample size issues
  • Bias, imprecise denominators, variable time frames, subjects lost to follow-up
  • Important role of a statistician consultant is stressed
Format: Preparing the manuscript

• Discussion
  • First sentence should clearly state what was found and why it is important
  • Compare and contrast findings with the literature
    • Importance of the literature review
    • Reasonable number of references
  • Strengths and limitations of study
  • Recommendations for future study

• Conclusions – based only on the study results!
Common errors in manuscript preparation

• Using colloquial and slang language
• Using clichés
• Subject, verb disagreements
• Using technical jargon without explanation of the terms
• Antecedent and pronoun disagreement
• Unclear pronoun references creating ambiguity
• Word confusion such as that/which, affect/effect, its/it’s, choose/chose, advice/advise, accept/except, proceed/precede; between/among; less/fewer; greater than/above; less than/below
• Strings of prepositional phrases
Common errors in manuscript preparation

- First use of acronyms without spelling them out
- Using too many acronyms
- Lack of transition sentences between paragraphs
- Lack of introductory sentences to a new paragraph
- Unverified claims
- Passive versus active verb voice
- Spell check does not know the difference between there and their
- Datum is singular, data is plural
- “This” on its own creates an ambiguous antecedent
- Failure to be concise
Bill

Peer Reviewers
The Peer Review Process

• The Journal depends very heavily on peer reviewers - they are the unsung heroes of the operation.
• Thank you, reviewers!
The Peer Review Process

• Reviewers perform the most detailed reading and analysis of a manuscript

• Reviewers provide confidential comments to the Editor (only)

• Reviewers provide more detailed comments to the authors, either directly in Editorial Manager or by attaching a Word or WordPerfect file (requires full Adobe Acrobat)
The Peer Review Process

• Authors are blinded to the reviewers but reviewers see authors’ names and institutions
• Two peer reviewers are assigned to each manuscript and sometimes a third reviewer
The Ideal Peer Review

• Timely
• Complete
• Provides clear recommendations to the editors
• Provides honest, straightforward comments to the authors in positive constructive language
The Ideal Peer Review

• Provides actionable recommendations to improve the manuscript
• Ideal length is one page
• Even with a recommendation for rejection, the goal is always to help by mentoring authors toward improving their future written submissions
Reviewers’ and Editor’s Comments

- Rare for a manuscript to be accepted at initial submission
- Expect recommendations for revision
- Essential to address all recommendations in the revision and to provide comments in the responses to reviewer box
- Do not delay too long in striving for the perfect manuscript. Timeliness of publication is important
- Rejection letters – maintain perspective and move ahead
Acceptance criteria

- Guidelines - yes; hard and fast rules – no
- Reviewers and Editors serve as mentors as well as evaluators
  - Improve manuscript
  - Sometimes suggest another venue or a fresh look at topic
  - Constructive appraisals, though there are personal differences.
- Criteria for Acceptance:
  - Interest to the readers of *Military Medicine*
  - Absence of major flaws or fuzzy thinking
  - Appropriate format, style, and clarity
Process to Become a Reviewer

• We are always looking for reviewers!
• Download an application from Journal’s web site
• Submit form to the *Military Medicine* office by e-mail or fax
• Include topical areas of interest and expertise
• Include current Curriculum Vitae (CV)
Process to become a reviewer

• Expect to review 2-4 manuscripts a year
• Invitation is extended by e-mail to your address of record
• Accept the offer if you are reasonably able to provide a timely review
• Suggest other reviewers if topic is outside area of your expertise
Summary: Authors & Reviewers

• During this session we discussed the importance of publishing our work in our career development and advancement of healthcare science.
• Selected the most appropriate format for presenting our research.
• Discussed several key steps in the preparation and submission of a manuscript.
• Developed a greater understanding of the importance of the peer review process.
Conclusion

• Participants should now be very familiar with how to go about submitting to our Journal
• The Editorial Staff looks forward to your participation as an author and a reviewer
• Let’s do it and have some fun in the process
• QUESTIONS? ? ?  ?