

Introduction to AuthorAID

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Publishing an original research is at times obligatory, as for faculty promotion or for moral reasons to let the world know the exciting results achieved in the work done. To get an article published requires many skills. The journey starts from conducting research on scientific guidelines, writing it and finally getting it in print in a reputed journal. There are many barriers which have to be crossed. It is a big challenge especially for authors with lesser skills, language difficulties and limited opportunities. Writing research is not easy as not all persons are born writers. The language of the selected journal may not be the same as the official language used by the author which could make writing difficult. Help is required and a very good source is AuthorAID.

What is AuthorAID?

AuthorAID supports researchers from developing countries in getting their work published. By definition AuthorAID is a global research community which provides networking, mentoring, resources and training for researchers worldwide with the aim of helping them to progress their research careers. To obtain help and guidance from AuthorAID, readers can obtain information from <http://www.authoraid.info/tcc-scientific-writing-publishing-graphical-methods-for-data-presentation>.¹

In this short communication, the components of an original article are discussed, based on published references of AuthorAID and the authors own personal experience. The objective is to give an insight into the good qualities of a well written scientific paper and how authors can achieve this with the help of AuthorAID

In writing an article the objective is to communicate your work to a specific audience. The authors have to realize what the journal editors, peer reviewers and professionals reading their work are expecting. The criticism offered is constructive to help in getting the article published. The initial questions considered are

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why, when, how, where (or which journal) and the target audience for whom the article is being written. Why is the article being written? What do the authors hope to achieve in this study? This has to be understood by the authors, before embarking upon the study. When starting to write, authors should seek guidance from peers in their field who are more experienced in publishing journal articles. Using the work as an oral presentation, first at a local conference, can help in deciding whether the work is publishable.

For selecting a journal, it is advisable to note if similar work has been published in it. The journal's website and instructions to authors should be consulted. Also to be considered are whether, the journal has open access, the speed and likelihood of acceptance and publication, and the quality of reproduction of figures submitted for publication.^{2,3} The authors need to keep in mind that the level of the article is suitable for the readers i.e. the audience for whom the article is being written.

Impact factor of a journal (from science Citation index-Journal Citation Reports) indicates how much articles in the journal tend to be cited. However, it does not say how much the given article will be cited. The impact factor is not valid for comparison from field to field and changes over time. Another implication of the word impact is the effect the published work can have on the practice, policy or teaching.⁴

Components of Original Article:

The components of an original article include IMRAD (introduction, method, result and discussion).⁵ These with reference to authorAID are now explained in detail.

Title; Most experienced writers suggest that the Title and abstract should be written last. The reason being that once the article has been completed, the author is now very clear on the summary of the work as a whole and can cap it with an appropriate title.² The abstract should be organized like a scientific paper (for example, in sort of a mini-IMRAD format). In structured abstracts there are standardized headings. Depending on the kind of paper and the journal, it can be

informative (summarizing the content of the paper) or just indicative (stating the topics included). Before submission of the paper, the abstract should be revised very carefully and its content should be consistent with the main paper. The key words should be selected and verified according to the MeSH (medical subject headings) guidelines.⁶

The introduction of the article is funnel shaped, moving from the general information followed by specific information related to the research being conducted. It highlights relevant previous research, identifies unanswered question(s), shows the approach used by the author to find an answer(s) and lastly focuses the objective of the work being undertaken.⁷

Methods section should be written in a manner so that other researchers can replicate what has been done by the authors, to test the methods and to be able to use it for further research. It may also allow others to evaluate what has been done by the authors, to determine if the conclusions are valid and applicable to other situations.⁸ An overview of the study design, identification of the equipment, organisms, reagent (and sources thereof) has to be mentioned. The approval of human or animal research by an appropriate committee is an essential requirement. Statistical methods have to be described.

Results section of the manuscript may include subheadings, tables and figures. They are written in the past tense. The strengths of the table should be reviewed. All figures and tables need to be concise, appropriately labelled and well designed.^{1,7} The details given in the Tables should not be repeated in the text.

Discussion, is generally considered a difficult portion of the paper for writing because authors have a wider choice for expressing their opinion. This can cause the authors to loose focus and unrelated information can be included. The discussion should begin with a brief summary of the main findings and should answer the question(s) stated in the introduction (or address the hypothesis). The findings should be in context of the strengths of the study eg detailed and extensive data.

The discussion also includes relationship or similarities to findings of other research whether by the authors themselves, others or both. The differences from previous findings need to be documented, reason for similarities and differences with application, implications or both. The authors must clarify why their findings refute or support previous studies done and whether any modifications are suggested. Finally if

other research is needed, this should be mentioned such as unanswered questions or new questions which arise by the findings. Typically the authors should move from specific to general (opposite of introduction and hence inverted funnel shaped). The discussion should comply with the instructions of the target journal taking notice of the length, type of contents, organisation of phrases commonly used and citation of references.³

The discussion is followed by the conclusion which includes and emphasizes the objective and outcome of the study. This section is brief, not more than a few pertinent lines.

The limitations of the study should be mentioned at the end eg. short follow-up, lost to follow-up, small sample size, outliers in the data and problems encountered with the experiments etc. The limitations must be mentioned by the authors, rather than by the peer reviewers and readers. A worse scenario for the author can be if the peer reviewers and readers think that authors are unaware of the pitfalls of their work. If the limitations do not affect the conclusion, they should be explained by the authors.

Acknowledgement: This section acknowledges the support of people who have helped for the published study. These individuals did not make contributions deserving authorship. Permission should be obtained from these people whom the authors wish to list. Financial support if any should be mentioned.¹

References: This gives credit to others for their work, adds credibility to authors own work by showing that valid sources of information that have been used, relates the authors work to published work and helps readers find further information on the concerned topic. References should be accurate and according to the format required by the target journal,¹¹ which could be either Vancouver or Harvard style.² For citation in the text and reference list, EndNote can be used.¹² This allows authors to keep the database of references and reference management of software. The author should check each reference against the original source, cite only those references that have been read by him/her, and use other articles in the same journal as models.

Finally, authenticity, accuracy, originality, due credit to individuals involved in the work and conflict of interest, are some of the areas which every author has to address to make his work acceptable for publication in a standard journal following the guidelines of World

Association of Medical Editors (WAME)⁹ or Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).¹⁰

Advice for Local Authors:

After completing the article, it is advisable to read it again and to rewrite, polish and improve the style. This includes omission of unnecessary words, jargon and common errors of grammar. The spelling, punctuation and grammar should be correct. Racial and ethnic identity should not be disclosed. The essentials are content, organization, and clarity. An article with an excellent content and if well organized is likely to be accepted even if the language is not up to the mark. Editors always provide the assistance.

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