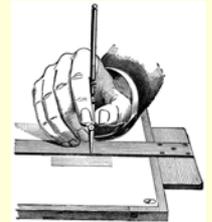
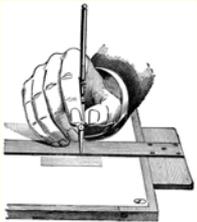


AuthorAID
in the Eastern
Mediterranean

**1st International Congress on
Medical Writing
February 19-21, 2013
Dubai, UAE**

Strategies for success
Research writing and
publication



Karen Shashok

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Part 1

Publication strategy in a competitive global environment



M. Xeridat, in Van Kolschooten F. Can you believe what you read? *Nature* 2002;416:360-363

Two main **economic models**:
Commercial vs. not-for-profit
publisher

Both produce good journals and
attract good manuscripts.

“Official” publications of a **national
scientific society** may not be
open to manuscripts for other
countries.

Two access models:

- **Payment required by reader** (subscription or pay-per-view)
- **Open access** (payment required by author)

Both use peer review.

Both produce good and bad journals.

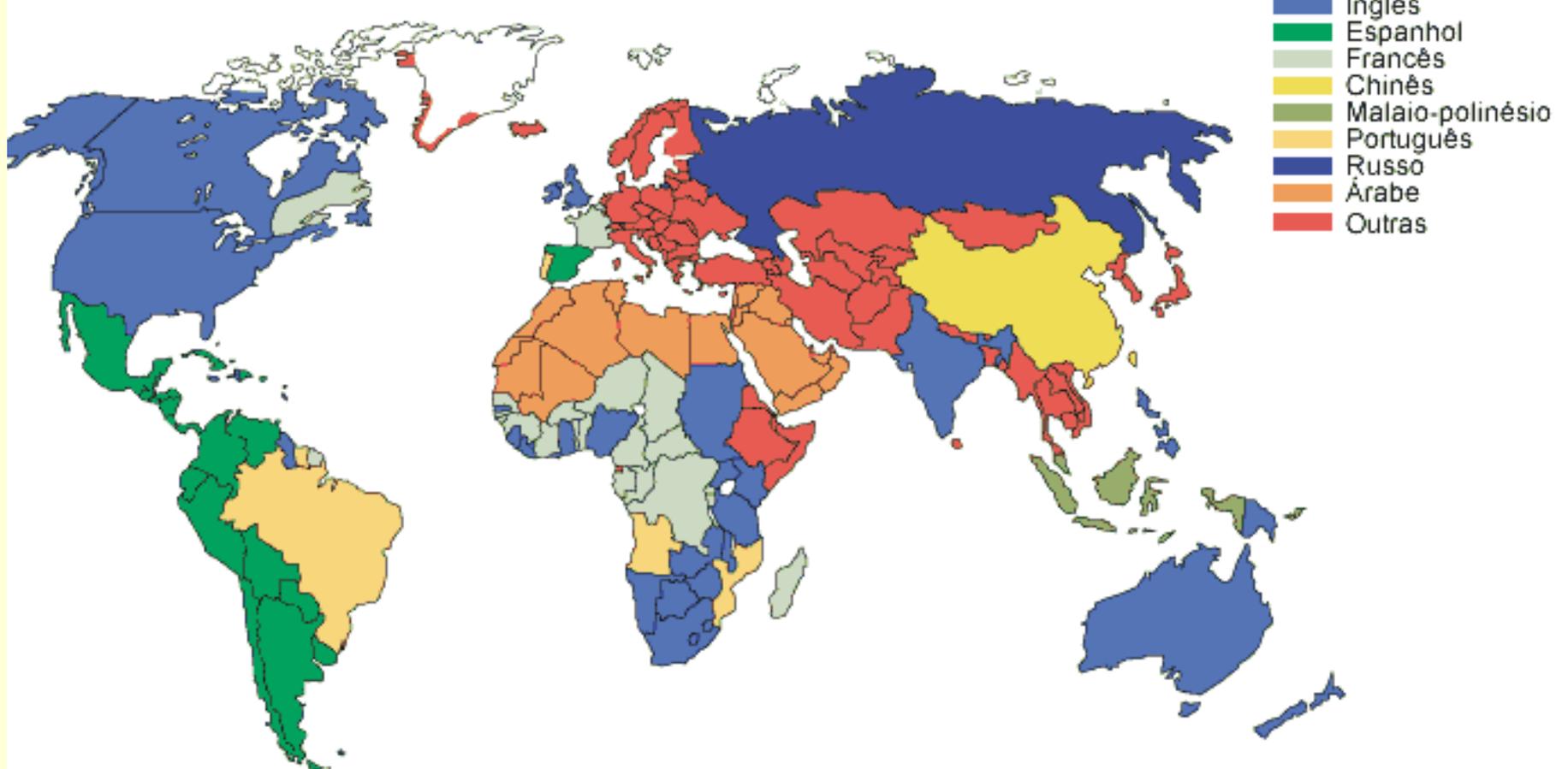
Open access does not always require the author to pay.

Insight into journal policies can help authors select target journals with better chances of **success**:

- more favorable reception
- faster review and publication
- communicating with readers who will use your results

Anglocentrism and globalization

Mapa Lingüístico e suas principais línguas



- Peer reviewer and editing improve the article but do not make it perfect.
- Even if research is not perfect, the report of the research should be as accurate and helpful to readers as possible.
- Most of the quality (both scientific and language/reporting/writing) should be provided by authors.

To reach the **right readers**

An optimal match between your work
and the journal's mission

(Guyatt and Haynes, 2006)

Where will the article be seen by the
greatest number of most interested
readers?

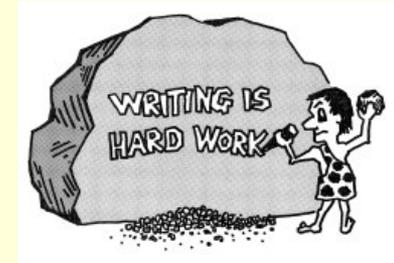
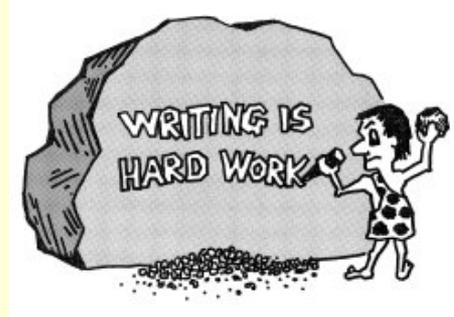
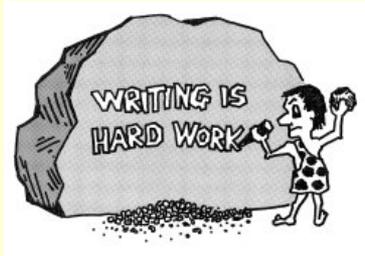
Writing strategies

The whiteboard contains the following content:

- Top Left:** $F_g = \frac{m_1 m_2 G}{r^2}$, $I_{in}^2 = U_{in}^2 \left[\frac{a}{R^2} + \left(\frac{1}{x_c} - \frac{1}{x} \right)^2 \right]$, $E = \frac{h^2 k^2}{2m}$
- Top Right:** $E = mc^2$, $\oint \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{l} = \mu_0 \sum \mathbf{I}_j$, $T = \frac{4\pi m r^2}{(m_1 + m_2)^2}$
- Middle Left:** A diagram with three overlapping shaded regions (green, red, blue) labeled A, B, and C. Below it, $\oint \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{s} = \mu_0 Q$ and $a^2 = b^2 + c^2 - 2bc \cos \alpha$.
- Middle Right:** A diagram of a right-angled triangle with sides a, b, c and angles A, B, C. Below it, $Q = mc \Delta T_A$, $\beta = \frac{\Delta l}{l}$, $v = \frac{c}{\sqrt{1 - \beta^2}}$, $v = \frac{c}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}}$, $\beta = \frac{c \cdot c}{\Delta T B}$, $\alpha = c \cdot c \cdot a$.
- Center:** A coordinate system with a sine wave $\sin 2x$ and a cosine wave $\cos 2x$. Equations include $\Phi = NBS \sin \theta = \frac{\Delta M \cdot y}{\Delta x}$, $\cos 2x = \cos^2 x - \sin^2 x$, $\sin 2x = 2 \sin x \cos x$, $\sin^2 x + \cos^2 x = 1$, $\sin^2 x = \frac{1 - \cos 2x}{2}$, $\cos^2 x = \frac{1 + \cos 2x}{2}$, $\frac{\partial}{\partial x} = 2, \frac{\partial}{\partial y} = 0$, $\vec{v} = (v_x, v_y, v_z)$.
- Bottom Left:** A grid with numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
- Bottom Center:** $\psi = \sqrt{\frac{2\pi}{\lambda}} \sin \left(\frac{2\pi}{\lambda} (x - y) \right)$, $E = \frac{1}{2} h \nu = \frac{1}{2} h \frac{c}{\lambda}$.

Buchachon
Petthanya

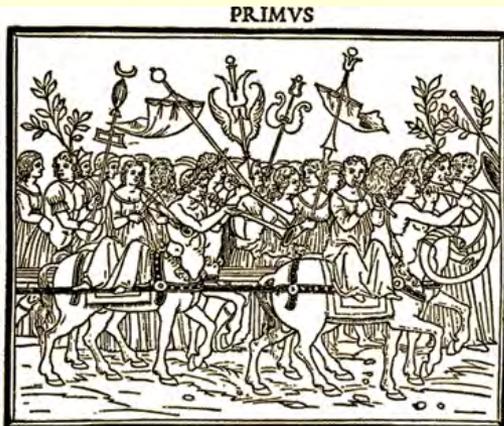
Ready to write?



When you write the manuscript, ask yourself **who needs to know** what you found.

Before you finish the manuscript, **identify the journals most likely to accept it.**

Goal: a text that is clear and accurate, not a work of art

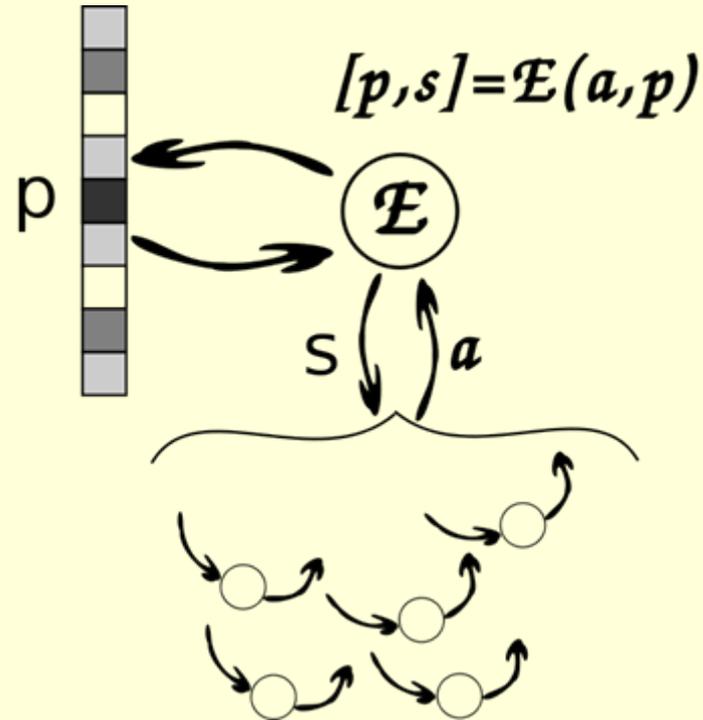


EL SEQVENTE triúpho nó meno mirae glioso d'l primo. Impo che egli hauea le q̄tro uolubile rotetutte, & gli radii, & il medittullo defu fco achate, di cãdide uẽule uagamẽte uaricato. Ne tale certãnte gestoe re Pyrro cù le noue Muse & Apolline i medio pulsãte dalla natura ip̄sso.

Laxide & la forma del dicto q̄le el primo, ma le tabelle eraõ di cyaneo Saphyro orientale, atomato de scintillule doro, alla magica gratissimo, & longo acceptissimo a cupidine nella sinistra mano.

Nella tabella dextra mirai exscalpto una insigne Matrõa che dui oui hauea parturito, in uno cubile regio colloca ta, di uno mirabile pallacio, Cum obstetrices tu pefacte, & multe altre matrone & astante Nymphe Degli quali uscua de uno una flammula, & delaltro ouo due spectatissime stelle.

* *
*



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1. A simple and boring text is better than a complex, “interesting” text that is hard to understand.

How do I start writing?

- Use whatever strategy works for you.
- Be prepared to think hard about who your **readers** will be and what they need to know.
- Be prepared to make many changes.

Writing strategies

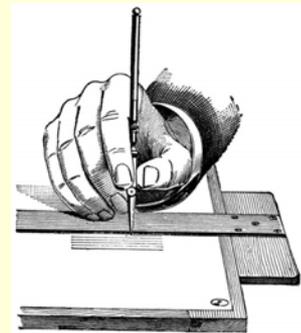
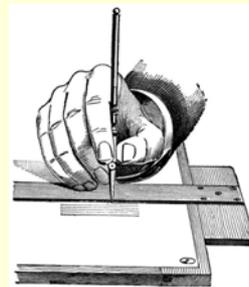
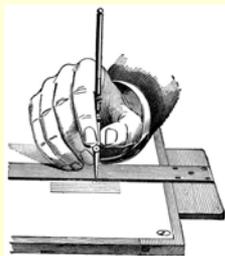
- Make notes or draft parts of the text any time you have an idea.
- Make an outline.
- Make a list of references that should be cited.
- Write the easy parts first and the hard parts last.

To make a good first impression

- Invest time to compare journals.**
- Write specifically for the journal.**
- Follow the **Instructions for Authors** or **Guidelines for Manuscript Preparation** carefully. Details are as important as content.**
- Title page, abstract, references, tables, figures**

Revise, correct and rewrite patiently.

It is normal for a good article to be rewritten many times before it is clear enough for **readers** to understand easily.



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Part 2

Title and Abstract: Accuracy, clarity and impact



A **title that reflects the contents**

What subjects? What population?

What conditions? Where?

**What setting (local, national,
regional, international)?**

Experimental or observational?

When?

Title

Emphasis on the hypothesis, the method, or the results?

Should the title state the conclusion?

Consult examples in your target journal.

An **Abstract** that reflects the contents

- Re-revise the abstract after the main manuscript is completely finished.
- **No discrepancies** in the information in the abstract, main text, and tables or figures for: **terminology, sample size, population size, numerical data**

Part 3

Introduction section: Asking an important question, choosing the best method



**Ellie
Davies**

An **Introduction that attracts attention and identifies the target population of readers**

- Interesting first sentence**
- Identify the problem or gap in knowledge.**
- State your proposed solution.**
- Say how you tested your solution.**

Ask a specific question. Provide a specific answer.

Your **statement of purpose** (at the end of the Introduction) is the anchor for the whole article.

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EXERCISE

Please write a title for the abstracts.

What specialty do you think the articles are from?

What specialists need to read this article to improve their research or clinical care?

1. Exploring Middle-Eastern mothers' perceptions and experiences of breastfeeding in Canada: an ethnographic study.

Maternal & Child Nutrition

2. Performance of iron spot test with Arabic bread made from fortified white wheat flour.

Food and Nutrition Bulletin

3. A historical review of progress in the assessment of dietary zinc intake as an indicator of population zinc status.

Advances in Nutrition

Part 4

Quoting, citing and referencing



Blog of
Unnecessary
Quotation
Marks

6. Don't copy and paste from other articles. The English may not be very good.

Many articles in an unreadable writing style are published even in top journals.

**Vasconcelos SMR.
Writing up research in
English: Choice or
necessity? Rev Col
Bras Cir 2007; 34:1-2**

would tell us that writing well can boost the authors' chances of getting published. Even so, attention to language among scientists is still scant, which would account for the number of unreadable articles published even in top-tier journals. In a Letter published in the *British Medical Journal*⁶, the author reports that "over the past 20 years..." many articles have shown "that medical information (such as journal articles, informed consent forms) is written in an 'unreadable' writing style." Among the authors of such texts are NES researchers, as even those writing in their mother tongue can be poor writers. However, improving writing skills in the native

How to improve citation accuracy and avoid plagiarism

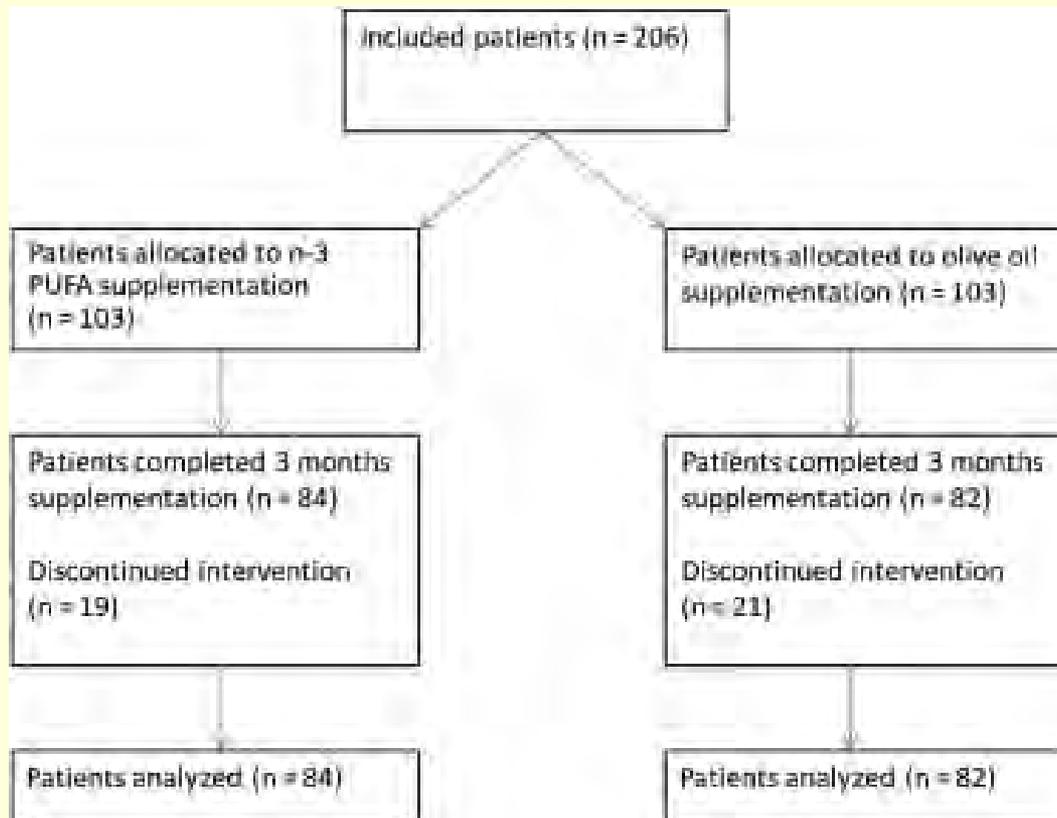
1. Avoid copy-and-paste.
2. Write or revise all the text yourself.
3. Insert provisional references (author-year) in the first draft.
4. Paraphrase for only 1 or 2 lines and provide the reference.
5. Use “verbatim quotations” for only 1 or 2 lines and provide the reference.

Plagiarism detection



Part 5

Patients and methods section: Methodologies and reporting guidelines



Rasmussen
et al. 2010

Emphasis on research **methodology**
and **reporting**

- Follow the EQUATOR reporting
checklists for different study designs

[http://www.equator-
network.org/resource-centre/library-
of-health-research-
reporting/reporting-guidelines/](http://www.equator-network.org/resource-centre/library-of-health-research-reporting/reporting-guidelines/)

Methods

- **Setting, population, sample**
- **Reproducibility**
- **Exact name, manufacturer, city and country of materials (apparatus, reagents, cell lines, antibodies, etc.)**
- **Compliance with ethics guidelines**

Methods that don't keep secrets.

No secret ingredients or secret techniques please!



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Part 6

Results section: Clarity in data reporting, tables and figures



Kiselev
Andrey

Results that focus on the question asked in the Introduction

- **Figures and tables** that focus on the question asked, and the data that help readers answer it for themselves
- **No repetition** of data among text, tables and figures
- **Follow the order of subsections in the Methods section**

Results that focus on the question asked in the Introduction

- If you present data clearly, the readers will be able to foresee your conclusions.
- Your article will be more convincing.

Part 7

Discussion section: Organization and convincing conclusions

The
Plainspoken
Scientist



A Discussion that explains what your findings mean

- Do not discuss data that are not included in the Results section.

- Answer the **question** you asked in the **Introduction**.

A Discussion that is critical of your own study

- Explain to what extent the conclusions can be **generalized**.
- Identify the **limitations**.
- **Suggest new studies** that could help answer questions that require more data.

Refer to your **statement of purpose** often while writing and revising, to stay focussed on the **aim of the study** and the **new, original key results.**



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Eliminate discussion and references that are not related to the research question at the end of the Introduction.



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Relate the conclusions explicitly to the aim of the study.



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EXERCISE 2 Clear writing

Please look at the examples in your handout.

1. Never use –ing, especially “using”.
2. Never use “respectively” especially with lists of numerical data.
3. Never use an abbreviation without defining it.
4. Never mix up USA spelling (e.g. center) and UK spelling (e.g. centre).
5. Never have differences in the aims, conclusions or data (including statistical results) between the abstract, main text and tables or figures.

Part 8

Peer review: Responding effectively

Accept good advice but resist bad advice.

“Researchers overwhelmingly (90%) said the main area of effectiveness of peer review was in improving the quality of the published paper, and a similar percentage said it had improved their own last published paper, including **identifying scientific errors and missed and inaccurate references.**”

(Ware 2008)

“Our experience is that **substantial improvements** on the basis of reviewers’ comments **are unusual, but do happen on occasion.**”

(Guyatt and Haynes 2006)

For most researchers, and therefore most reviewers, English is not their first language.

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Expressions of respect, courtesy and politeness are different.



Scitable by
Nature
Education

Even manuscripts written by native speakers of English are frequently criticized for poor English.

It has frequently been said that despite the fact of having English as their first language, authors who fulfil this criterion may nonetheless receive frequent negative feedback due to the unfeasibility of discerning the meaning in their written communications.

“Far from this being an occasional occurrence, it seems that the **excuse of poor English** is used as a way of rejecting manuscripts, a handy tool to have in these days of heavy submission loads and the need to ‘cull’ manuscripts before peer review.”

(Cooter 2008)

“If I believe a **referee is mistaken** in his/her concern, and I know a way to defuse that mistaken concern without telling the referee that he/she is mistaken, then I will use that way because the probability of surviving the review process decreases when referee concerns are challenged rather than accepted.”

(Wright and Armstrong 2008, quoting an anonymous researcher)

Even though **reviewers** and **editors** are good researchers and subject experts, they may not be skilled in language or writing.

Editors depend on reviewers, and reviewers are not always right.

Authors' editors:

1. Help researchers improve their manuscripts to satisfy readers' expectations for **language, content and organization**
2. Do not write the first draft or rewrite text for the authors
3. Are contributors named in the Acknowledgements, but not authors named in the byline

Authors' editors:

- 4.** Are often but not always native speakers of English
- 5.** Can be specialists in science, in writing, or both
- 6.** Want researchers to publish successfully and learn good writing skills

Conclusions



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The reader needs to be convinced that your findings are **logical, valid, and supported by solid evidence**, not impressed by your writing style.

Every journal is different, every editor is different, but good writing is the same: **clear, rigorous and convincing.**

Impartial Judgment by the “Gatekeepers” of Science: Fallibility and Accountability in the Peer Review Process

Methods

Participants and procedures

To measure mortality we did a national cross-sectional cohort study of deaths from January, 2002, through July, 2006. Household information was gathered about deaths

that occurred between January of March 18, 2003, in all households compared with deaths that occurred through to the date of 12000 was calculated to doubling of an estimated pr

AT^{1*}, JOSEPH S. GONNELLA¹ and H²

RESULTS

Methodological and Statistical Content Study

Less than half of the 166 journals provided information on statistical methods (Table 1). Eighty-seven percent (13/15) of general journals and 36% (54/151) of specialty journals made reference to ICMJE uniform requirements.¹¹ Fifty-three percent

Clear:

The **reader** doesn't need to read the same sentence or paragraph more than once, and can navigate all parts of the article easily.

Rigorous:

- The results (including tables and figures) follow from the methods.
- The discussion follows from the introduction.
- The data are reported in a consistent manner.
- Limitations and possible additional studies are noted.

Convincing:

- Focus on answering the question asked in the introduction.
- Don't overstate or exaggerate your conclusions.
- Search for and correct technical errors.

Convincing:

Be confident in the interest and usefulness of **your** findings.



Thank-you very much
AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean
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