

## Editorial

### How to have a manuscript accepted for publication

For nearly 11 years, I have served as editor of the *Journal of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research* (JPHSR). During that time, I have read some outstanding manuscripts submitted for publication consideration, some adequate ones and unfortunately, too many that were not suitable for publication in an international journal. Now, I am sharing some of that experience in the hope that this might help the potential author have their work accepted for publication and cited by peers in the discipline. Research should inform policy and that is almost always accomplished using quantitative methodology. While qualitative methods serve a useful purpose, it is not helpful or beneficial to quote a few people out of a sample of 100 who suggested this or that. Most all qualitative-only manuscripts are rejected by peer reviewers since they rarely answer questions or guide policy.

We see too many manuscripts that report findings from a survey of a professor's students. First of all, students have little or no practical experience on which to form opinions and this is not generalizable beyond that single location and that single classroom. That study might be more acceptable if it were conducted at four different sites at different locations, but even then, it might not add anything to our body of knowledge. For example, if studies were conducted independently in the USA, UK, Australia and Egypt, all with nearly identical results, it is not likely that different results might be found in another country. Similarly, pharmacists' opinions or attitudes about some topic in a small city in Swaziland might be interesting and valuable in Swaziland, but probably not of use to pharmaceutical health service researchers elsewhere in the world.

Descriptive studies as well as experimental studies are usually useful to our readers. Manuscripts that come from M.S. or PhD dissertations are often quite good, but the author must realize that journal readers do not require every single table or figure or literature review contained in the dissertation itself. We welcome meta-analyses, critical reviews, brief reports and theoretical pieces as well

as opinion reports on interesting or important topics. The journal offers an informal service for authors. One should e-mail the editor with a statement of the topic or a few paragraphs describing the work, and we will reply rapidly to encourage or discourage further efforts toward JPHSR publication. We also offer suggestions how a manuscript might be improved and be more suitable for JPHSR publication. There is no fee for this service.

It is disappointing to see a manuscript that was rejected by one journal be submitted, unchanged, to a second journal. Peer reviewers serve as free consultants and it is so unwise to ignore the suggestions of the reviewers, most of whom are quite accomplished in their respective fields. For the author who is unsure about submitting a manuscript, our advice is to try and see what happens. You might be pleasantly surprised. Authors who are determined usually succeed, even if it requires two or three iterations to get it right.

Some points to consider: The research question should be of importance and topical. The most sophisticated statistical methodology will not help if the manuscript does not pass the 'so what' test. If no one is interested in the topic or study, you cannot expect the journal to find it of value. A great deal of outstanding work in health services research and outcomes research was reported before 1985 or so, when journal articles became available in digital form. A Google or PubMed search may not go back far enough and that is where professional librarians can be of enormous help.

It is usually beneficial to partner with colleagues at other institutions to combine your study so the results can be seen as more than a single-site phenomenon. Someone in the next country is even better.

It is hoped that these words might aid you in publishing a successful article in the JPHSR in the future.

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