

Promotion of Research with Research for Promotion

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Editor

“Scientific research, if not published, means it never happened. Communication of relevant information obtained by an individual or a group is of diminutive use unless it is shared among the peers.”¹ Since the first recorded clinical trial while looking for the cure of Scurvy by Royal Navy Surgeon named James Lind in 1747,² reporting of scientific evidence has seen a paradigm shift from ancient empirical observation publications to current meta-analyses. Current medical and dental education are not only emphasizing on the predefined acquisition of skills and competencies but are also seeing a vast expansion of knowledge and emergence of new specialties and sub-specialties.³ Henceforth, understanding and inculcating the newly emerging knowledge into clinical practice is of paramount importance in the medical and dental fraternity. With this objective, regulating authorities are incorporating research publications as necessary requirements for promotion amongst medical and dental fraternity, i.e. promotion of research with research for promotion.^{4,5}

To achieve the objective, understanding the meaning of research, is of utmost importance before sending a paper for publication. According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, ‘search’ is an attempt to find

something especially by looking carefully for them,⁶ whereas ‘research’ is a careful study of a subject, especially to discover new facts or information about it.⁶ The word “re-search” is the repetition of the search activities, and it is different from the word research;⁷ thus, it may be the mere collection of existing knowledge without any aim and objective.

Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, in their book “Practical Research Planning and Design,” defined research as “a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information (data) to increase our understanding of the phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned.”⁷ Research, an original contribution to the existing stock of knowledge aids making for its advancement, comprises of defining and redefining problems; formulating a hypothesis or suggested solutions; collecting, organizing and evaluating data; making deductions and reaching conclusions, and at last carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulating hypothesis. Based on various objectives, research studies may be exploratory or formative research studies; descriptive research, diagnostic research studies or hypothesis-testing research studies.⁸

All scientific journals provide “instructions to authors” for the preparation of the manuscript and submitting the manuscript to a journal. Papers accepted for publication are generally case reports, review (systematic as well as literature) articles, original research, practitioner section, short communication and letter to editor category, with unambiguous guidelines according to a specific journal. Further, the entire process of



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editorial and peer review, and criteria for accepting a research paper for publication is explained. Style of writing references (Vancouver or Harvard system) is also usually detailed. To maintain standardization, Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (URMs), were first published in 1978 as a way of systematizing manuscript format and preparation across journals. Currently, these guidelines were retitled as “Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals” that were released in 2013.⁹

IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) refers to the format in which most biomedical journals publish an original research paper.¹ PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is "an evidence-based minimum set of items for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses. It primarily focuses on the reporting of reviews evaluating randomized clinical trials, but can also be used as a basis for reporting systematic reviews of other types of research, particularly evaluations of interventions."¹⁰ CONSORT Statement, which is "an evidence-based, minimum set of recommendations for reporting randomized trials, offers a standard way for authors to prepare reports of trial findings, facilitating their complete and transparent reporting, and aiding their critical appraisal and interpretation." It encompasses a 25-item checklist and flow diagram, freely available for viewing and downloading.¹¹ through this website.¹¹ STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) stands for "an international, collaborative initiative of epidemiologists, methodologists, statisticians, researchers and journal editors involved in the conduct and dissemination of observational studies." Checklist of items that should be included in reports of observational studies is available as STROBE statement.¹² Case reports are “time-honored, important, integral, and accepted part of the medical literature. In general, a report of a single case (or series of cases) of a disease (or diseases) or a novel treatment modality, usually with an unexpected presentation, which typically describes the findings, clinical course, and prognosis of the case, often accompanied by a review of other cases previously reported in the biomedical literature to put the reported case in context.”¹³

Authors are encouraged to use these recommendations and are expected to follow the guidelines carefully and consistently before manuscript submission, which not only reduces the processing timing but also increase the percentage of acceptance of the manuscript for publication and ultimately the impact of a journal. Each aspect of paper from abstract to reference writing, including acknowledgment and conflict of interest statement, etc. is critical. The original idea with understanding and hard-work, compliance with journal guidelines and patience is the key. Besides the published guidelines, regular workshops on scientific paper writing are currently the part of education curriculum.

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