

## EDITORIAL

## How to Prepare a Manuscript for International Scholarly Publications

Teke Apalata, M.D., Ph.D.<sup>1,2</sup><sup>1</sup>Faculty of Health Sciences, Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, South Africa; <sup>2</sup>Associate Editor and Publisher for JIRESH-Biotech.**Corresponding Author:** Teke Apalata, MD, PhD (c): +27-825009728 E-mail: [ruffinapalata@gmail.com](mailto:ruffinapalata@gmail.com)*J. innov. res. health sci. biotechnol.* 2015; 1(2): 63 – 64.

doi: 10.18644/jiresh-biotech.0000011

Submitted 12/12/2015, accepted 25/12/2015 <http://jiresh-biotech.edmgr.com>

## Part – 1

This publication is part of Dr Apalata's quarterly editorial series in JIRESH-Biotech. Dr Apalata is a former Fogarty International Research Fellow in Global Health with the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, USA. In addition of being an academic in health sciences, Dr Apalata is an online entrepreneur, a digital marketer and an investor in the African real estate market. He won numerous prizes, awards and scholarships including the 2009 and 2015 "Lifetime Golden Key International Award" from the Golden Key International Honour Society. Dr Apalata's editorial series will serve as a guide by addressing challenges faced by young scholars when writing a research paper. The majority of postgraduate students and junior academics often found that writing their work for publication is time consuming and brain draining. At the end however, particularly when they are informed of their work being accepted for publication, it becomes one of the unforgettable moments all scholars treasure. Although this editorial target primarily young scholars, it can also serve as a reminder to the seasoned authors and researchers. Writing an academic paper for the first time can be a real challenge, but the most challenging issue is to recover from the disappointment of a rejected paper. Hence, a well-written academic paper comes from a great deal of preparation and effort, including researching, writing drafts, rewriting and editing.

*Is my work publishable?*

It is common sense to think of publishing your findings at the beginning of your research rather than at the end. However, from the Editors and Publishers point of view, the crucial question is always 'why do you want to publish your work?' Strictly speaking, in order to publish in internationally recognized and higher impact scientific journals, you should have findings that are new, interesting and challenging. Journals also prefer topics that are hot at the time of publication. Your work can also

provide solutions to existing problems but your solutions must have potential of being generalized. In addition, although your findings can be interesting, your tested hypothesis and study design must be sound and scientifically acceptable.

It is the first responsibility of each Editor to ensure that authors' paper provides sufficient "insight into an important issue" to be addressed. This is basically the most important element that all top scholarly journals are looking for in order to protect their journal's profile and reputation. Sufficient "insight" is useful for decision or policy makers but also for developing a new research framework or theory and stimulating new and important research questions. The second responsibility of each Editor is to question the appropriateness of the methods used to explore the subject under consideration for publication. The Editors of all top journals want to know if the methods used in your research are applied rigorously to explain your findings and conclusions. The third and last responsibility of the Editor will be to find out if the manuscript tells "a good story" or covers a "hot topic".

If your work does not meet the above described requirements, don't waste time to submit your paper in international journals but rather, submit your work in a local or lower impact factor journal. It can however be argued that lower impact factor journals also want manuscripts of higher standards leading to high number of citations by other scholars in order to boost up their publication series. Whether higher or lower impact factor journals, from Reviewers point of view, any manuscript must have sufficient new material, covering a topic that is within the scope of the journal and presented in a well organized fashion. Reviewers also allow for publication a manuscript that has methods or experimental designs able to be replicated whilst authors' results should be presented adequately and clearly. Often figures and tables are used to summarize results, but efforts should be made to avoid duplication of results using both narrative and

graphical presentations. Whether the discussion is combined with or separated from the results, it must be relevant, short but well documented. Finally, authors' conclusions and recommendations must be supported by the presented findings.

The other crucial question asked by authors is if negative findings from their research are publishable or not. In general, negative findings are as important as positive findings, however, in order to be publishable, the impacts of such findings are looked at on case by case basis. Researchers often fall in the trap of forcing their findings to become positive, mainly during statistical data analysis. This is part of violations in research and abuse of ethical principles. Violations include data fabrication and falsification, improper use of human subjects and animals in research, and using another author's ideas or wording without proper attribution.

Lastly, two important aspects are looked at in order to make a final decision of whether or not your work can be publishable in a scholarly journal – overall language used must be acceptable and in-text citations and listed references must be scientifically presented, valid and must respect each journal's style.

### **How can I structure my paper?**

Although each journal has requirements on how to structure a manuscript, the general structure of an original full text paper follows the **IMRAD** format, introduced as a standard by the American National Standards Institute in 1979. The **IMRAD** format includes "Introduction, **M**ethods, **R**esults **A**nd **D**iscussion." The purpose of this format is to allow authors to respond to specific questions when writing their manuscripts. For example, under the first section "Introduction", the authors should respond to the questions 'What did you/others do? Why did you do it?' while under section "**M**ethods" it is about 'How did you do it?' Whilst under "**R**esults" readers want to see 'What did you find?' the last section consisting of "**D**iscussion" is mainly about 'What does it all mean?'

The IMRAD format indicates a pattern rather than a complete list of headings or components of research

papers; the missing parts of a paper are: Title, Authors, Keywords, Abstract, Conclusions, and References. Additionally, some papers include Acknowledgments and Appendices.

A compelling "Introduction" defines the nature and extent of the problems studied, relates the research to previous work and explains the objectives of the current investigation. "Methods" followed should be described, usually step by step and in chronological order, with as much precision and detail as necessary. Standard methods can be referenced while new methods can be described with details. The value of a paper depends on the contents under "Results" section. The latter must be presented in an absolutely clear manner in just the right number of words, neither more nor less. In the last section "Discussion", authors explain meanings and implications of their results. The section pulls everything together and shows the importance and value of the work and is therefore the most innovative and difficult part of the paper to write.

Follow Dr Apalata's next Editorial Series for details on how to write each section of a manuscript to be published in higher impact factor scholarly journals. The next Editorial series will also include other sections of the manuscript beside the ones under the IMRAD format.

## **CONCLUSION**

Dr Apalata has based this first "Editorial Section" on materials and guides of Elsevier Journals with some of the materials featuring in Elsevier's Publishing Connect Tutorials. He also consulted several web pages from academic scholars. His appreciation goes to Prof. Kensese Mossanda, the Executive Secretary of JIRESH-Biotech and also to Prof. Jean Cadet, the Editor-in-Chief for JIRESH-Biotech.