

EDITORIAL

Common Mistakes in Manuscripts Submitted for Publication

Saw Aik, FRCS (Ed), Sharaf Ibrahim*, FRCS (Glasg)

Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Malaysian Orthopaedic Journal (MOJ) welcomes articles that enriches the knowledge of our readers. The important factor that determines the final outcome of an article submitted for publication is the scientific quality. The structure or format of the article is another equally important factor. The materials presented should be organised following a sequence that reflects the author's flow of thought with relevant illustrations to enhance the readability of the manuscript. Manuscripts submitted to the MOJ have several common mistakes which we will highlight in this editorial.

Format of the article

There are several types of articles accepted by medical journals for publication. These include case reports, original articles and letters to the editor. Others such as review articles, editorials, and commentaries are usually by the invitation of the editor. The format of the manuscripts differ depending on the type of article. The MOJ prefers original articles to be presented according to headings following the acronym "IMRAD" which stands for Introduction, Materials and Method, Results and Discussion. For case reports, "Introduction" followed by "Case Report" and "Discussion" is adequate. It is important for authors to prepare their manuscripts according to these headings because it represents the essential components of the article. Subheadings such as surgical technique, complications, statistical analysis and limitations are usually not necessary as they will be included under the main headings.

Abstract

The MOJ prefers structured abstracts for original papers and unstructured abstracts for case reports. References and illustrations should not be included in the abstract.

Introduction

The purpose of this section is for authors to briefly introduce the subject including the aim of the study. An introduction without any references is not acceptable as references are essential for readers to verify the statements.

Materials, Methods and Discussion

The need for subheadings indicates poor formatting of the content and the manuscript will require revision. Authors should remove redundant and irrelevant text and reformat the manuscript using paragraphs under the main headings of "IMRAD".

Another common mistake is to present information using "note" form, without explaining in complete sentences. The MOJ only accept manuscripts written in complete sentences to avoid mistakes during type setting. When appropriate, "Tables" or "Figures" should be used.

Plagiarism is not acceptable and all references must be cited.

References

Accuracy in citing references is important to correctly acknowledge the authors' cited. The impact factor and H-Index are calculated from citations of published articles. The MOJ expect compliance with the guidelines for preparing references including the number of authors to be listed before using et al. Other requirements include the use of standard abbreviations of journal names and listing the publication year, volume, issue and page numbers in the specific format for the MOJ. Mistakes in citing references is one of the main reason for the delay in publication of articles. The MOJ allows a maximum of five references for case reports and a limitation of the word count. The purpose of setting this limit is to encourage authors to focus on highlighting new knowledge and not as an extensive review of the literature.

Tables

Tables must not be presented as images cropped from excel files as it is not possible to improve the images during type-setting. Tables should be constructed on word document without any background colour of the columns or rows, and with no vertical lines and minimal use of horizontal lines within the main border. This will allow the editorial office to modify the table format according to the house-style of the journal.

Illustrations

Illustrations are important in a manuscript as they complement the text with a visual explanation.

Illustrations or figures for a scientific article consist of photographs, images, diagrams and graphs. There are several common errors with the illustrations submitted to the MOJ. These include poor quality, captions which are not self-explanatory, inadequate labelling and not citing the figures in the text.

Photographs include clinical photographs and photomicrographs. Some of the errors with photographs include images which are out-of-focus, not cropped and the patient is sometimes identifiable. Close-up photographs need to be taken using a camera with a macro lens as close-up image quality taken with a mobile phone camera is poor as a mobile phone camera does not have a macro lens. Photographs should be taken without any distracting background. Photomicrographs of pathology specimens must state the magnification and staining used.

Images usually consist of radiographs, ultrasound and CT/MRI scans. Since not all institutions have digitized images, images taken with a camera tend to have a bluish tinge and must be converted to gray scale when submitting for publication. Flash photography must not be used and authors must ensure that the ceiling lights are not reflected in the images. Images must be cropped to avoid including the

C-arm monitor or the radiograph light box in the illustration. Diagrams include line drawing and algorithms. Line drawings are useful to clarify details which may be difficult to visualize in intra-operative photographs or radiographic images. Instead of a lengthy text description, an algorithm or flow chart may be used when appropriate.

Graphs include pie charts, bar graphs, histograms, scatter-plot, and box and whisker plot. Graphs should be submitted in 2D and not 3D for publication. The X and Y axes of graphs must be clearly labelled.

The MOJ accepts a maximum of 3 figures for a case-report and all photographs and images submitted must be of the highest quality to ensure clarity when the manuscript is printed.

Summary

We prefer articles that are short and focused. An extensive review of the literature on a subject are for review articles and it is not the main purpose for publishing original studies or case reports. Well prepared articles makes it easier for editors and peer reviewers to evaluate the scientific content of the paper which is the main consideration for publication. We strongly recommend authors to carefully review the instructions to authors before submitting their manuscripts. A rejection or a delay in publication is very likely for manuscripts not prepared according to the guidelines of the MOJ.