The Art of Publishing

Dear Readers,

Writing is seen as an art, and as you know, art, too, can be studied. Fortunately, scientific publishing is in its essence simpler, because it theoretically follows strict rules, and these can certainly be learned! The practice of it, however, turns out to be quite different. Only a few universities teach their students how to design, document, and report on a scientific project. Most authors of scientific papers – myself included – have learned it the hard way, according to the "do it yourself" principle or in other words, "learning by doing". The disadvantage of this is that reviewers are increasingly bogged down in correcting things which are basically avoidable. Therefore, I would like to remind you now of the five most common complaints of reviewers, which I personally think should not happen at all:

Language: This is by far the most frequent complaint. I realize that most of us must publish in a language which is not our mother tongue. But "Franglish, Germanglish, Itanglish, Portunglish, Spanglish, Swinglish" etc. are definitely NOT good English. Hence, I strongly advise every author to seek professional help. The person helping should have English as his/her native language and be a dentist or at least knowledgeable of the dental nomenclature. The second best option is to ask a dentist who has studied/worked/lived for several years in an English-speaking country. If you do not have anyone at hand, it is possible to find help from professionals specialized in editing scientific texts (eg, www.oleng.com.au)

Hypothesis: Based on the complete existing knowledge found in the literature, the introduction should quickly lead the reader to understand why a study was performed. Clear objectives must be defined. At the end of the introduction, scientists must formulate a null hypothesis, which later in the paper can be accepted or rejected based on the data. This is often missing.

Statistics: Statistics are a tool. People using tools ought to be trained in their use. This is even more important for statistics. Very often, we find that the two statistical worlds (normal vs. non-normal distribution) have been mixed, which is not correct. If you have data which are normally distributed, then parametric tests are appropriate, where the mean and standard deviation describe your data. If the data are not normally distributed (skewed), then nonparametric procedures must be used.The central tendency is described by the median and the variability by percentiles (eg, the 25th and 75th). If you yourself are not well trained in the use of statistics, please consult a statistician. It will definitely improve your paper, especially if you consult your statistician in the planning phase of the experiments.

Instructions for authors: I see more and more manuscripts by authors who obviously did not read the JAD's Guidelines for Authors. This is very visible when, for instance, the literature format is wrong.

Poor discussion: In the discussion, both the methods and the results should be discussed. A discussion is NOT a repetition of facts from the introduction or the results section. A discussion should try to explain and interpret the results, and if possible, relate them to the clinical world. Furthermore, it should highlight further research themes or directions based on the findings of the study.

Dear Authors, this is a very condensed version of a lecture I compiled many years ago, but it is still very up to date. The Journal of Adhesive Dentistry receives approximately one manuscript submission a day. All these manuscripts must be reviewed in order to guarantee that they are correct. You can all help speed up the review process by doing an "autoreview": look at your own manuscript very critically and at least make sure that the formal aspects are correct.

Sincerely yours,

J.-F. Roulet
Editor-in-Chief