Kee Siaw Pae, Taiwan Sales Director

Elsevier Author Workshop
Sep 2009
Outline

• To publish or not to publish…
• Writing a quality manuscript
  • Preparations
  • Article construction
  • Language
  • Technical details
• Revisions and response to reviewers
• Ethical issues
• Conclusions: getting accepted
To publish or not to publish…
Why publish?

• Scientists publish to **share** with the **research community** findings that **advance knowledge and understanding**

  • To present new, original results or methods

  • To rationalize published results

  • To present a review of the field or to summarize a particular topic
Who judges your article?

- Someone like you!
- Chief editor has the final say
- Reviewers check the manuscript in detail
- All are based in a university and are fulltime researchers
- Checking articles is an activity outside of their normal job
- They’re very very busy…
Publishers do want quality

**WANTED**

- Originality
- Significant advances in field
- Appropriate methods and conclusions
- Readability
- Studies that meet ethical standards

**NOT WANTED**

- Duplications
- Reports of no scientific interest
- Work out of date
- Inappropriate methods or conclusions
- Studies with insufficient data
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<td>Murphy, B.R.</td>
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<td>Rimmelzwaan, G.F.</td>
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<td>European Communicable Disease Bulletin</td>
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<td>Journal of Virolological Methods</td>
<td>Wright, P.F.</td>
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1. Insights from investigating with the M2 proton channel
2. Ligand-based dual target of first study
3. Emergence of oseltamivir-resistant influenza A virus strains related to the 1918 and 2009 global pandemics
4. A hundred million vaccines pour un milliard d'euros
5. Two genotypes of H1N2 swine influenza viruses appeared among pigs in China
6. Hemagglutinin and neuraminidase matching patterns of two influenza A virus strains related to the 1918 and 2009 global pandemics
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Writing a quality manuscript

• Preparations
What type of manuscript?

Full articles / Original articles
(including Theoretical, Methodology papers, Case studies, …)

Letters / Rapid Communications / Short Communications

Review papers / Perspectives

- Self-evaluate your work: Is it sufficient for a full article? Or are your results so thrilling that they need to be revealed as soon as possible?

- Ask your supervisor and colleagues for advice on manuscript type. Sometimes outsiders may see things more clearly than you.
Who is the audience?

• Do you want to reach specialists, multidisciplinary researchers, or a general audience? You will need to adjust information and writing style accordingly.

• Journals, even in similar subjects, reach readers with different backgrounds.

• Each journal has its own style; read other articles to get an idea of what is accepted.

• Is the readership worldwide or local?
Which journal?

• Consider:
  – Aims and scope (check journal websites and recent articles)
  – Types of articles
  – Readership
  – Current hot topics (go through recent abstracts)
  – Asking colleagues for advice

Sometimes it is necessary to lower one’s sights or return to the lab/clinic to obtain more data
Consulting the Guide for Authors will save your time and the editor’s.

All editors hate wasting time on poorly prepared manuscripts.
Format

• Consult and apply the list of guidelines in the “Guide for Authors”

• Ensure that you use the correct:
  – Layout
  – Section lengths (stick to word limits)
  – Nomenclature, abbreviations and spelling (British vs. American)
  – Reference format
  – Number/type of figures and tables
  – Statistics
Writing a quality manuscript

• Article construction
Article structure

• Title
• Authors
• Abstract
• Keywords

Main text (IMRaD)
  – Introduction
  – Methods
  – Results
  – Discussion (Conclusion)

• Acknowledgements
• References
• Supplementary material

Need to be accurate and informative for effective indexing and searching

Each has a distinct function
A good title should contain the fewest possible words that adequately describe the contents of a paper.

**DO**
- Convey main findings of research
- Be specific
- Be concise
- Be complete
- Attract readers

**DON’T**
- Use unnecessary jargon
- Use uncommon abbreviations
- Use ambiguous terms
- Use unnecessary detail
- Focus on part of the content only
Relationships between information processing, depression, fatigue and cognition in multiple sclerosis
Authors and affiliations

Be consistent with spelling, full versus short names, full versus short addresses

Surnames: Pérez-García / Pérez / García
Middle Initial: Use consistently or not at all
First Names: Dave / David
Affiliation: Faculty of Medicine / Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences
The quality of an abstract will strongly influence the editor’s decision

A good abstract:

- Is precise and honest
- Can stand alone
- Uses no technical jargon
- Is brief and specific
- Cites no references

Use the abstract to “sell” your article
Keywords are important for indexing: they enable your manuscript to be more easily identified and cited.

Check the Guide for Authors for journal requirements.

- Keywords should be specific
- Avoid uncommon abbreviations and general terms
Failure to replicate the association between \textit{NRG1} and schizophrenia using Japanese large sample

Masashi Ikeda\textsuperscript{a,*,1}, Nagahide Takahashi\textsuperscript{b,c,1}, Shinichi Saito\textsuperscript{c}, Branko Aleksic\textsuperscript{a,c}, Yuichiro Watanabe\textsuperscript{d}, Ayako Nunokawa\textsuperscript{d}, Yoshio Yamanouchi\textsuperscript{a}, Tsuyoshi Kitajima\textsuperscript{a}, Yoko Kinoshita\textsuperscript{a}, Taro Kishi\textsuperscript{a}, Kunihiro Kawashima\textsuperscript{a}, Ryota Hashimoto\textsuperscript{e,f}, Hiroshi Ujike\textsuperscript{e}, Toshiya Inada\textsuperscript{h}, Toshiyuki Someya\textsuperscript{d}, Masatoshi Takeda\textsuperscript{e,f}, Norio Ozaki\textsuperscript{c}, Nakao Iwata\textsuperscript{a}

\textit{Keywords}: Schizophrenia; Neuregulin 1; Association study; False positive; Linkage disequilibrium

Bad keywords: Psychiatric disorder, \textit{NRG1}, LD, SNPs, Japanese large sample, association
Introduction

Provide the necessary background information to put your work into context

It should be clear from the introduction:

• Why the current work was performed
  – aims
  – significance
• What has been done before
• What was done in your research (in brief terms)
• What was achieved (in brief terms)
DO

• Consult the Guide for Authors for word limit
• “Set the scene”
• Outline “the problem” and hypotheses
• Ensure that the literature cited is balanced, up to date and relevant
• Define any non-standard abbreviations and jargon
Introduction

DON’T

• Write an extensive review of the field

• Cite disproportionately your own work, work of colleagues or work that supports your findings while ignoring contradictory studies or work by competitors

• Describe methods, results or conclusions other than to outline what was done and achieved in the final paragraph

• Overuse terms like “novel” and “for the first time”
Rotenone is a naturally occurring plant compound derived from the root and bark of some Luguminosae species… Administration of rotenone has been shown to lead to biochemical, anatomical, and behavioral symptoms resembling Parkinson’s disease due to neurotoxicity [1–3]. Previous studies have shown that… However, other studies contradict these findings… Understanding the exact mode of action of rotenone should provide additional useful information toward its possible application in oral cancer treatment. In this report, we…
The Methods section must provide sufficient information so that a knowledgeable reader can reproduce the experiment.

List suppliers of reagents and manufacturers of equipment, and define apparatus in familiar terms:

“using an AD 340C plate reader (Beckman Coulter)”

OR

“using a plate reader (Beckman Coulter AD 340C)”

NOT

“using a Beckman Coulter AD 340C.”

Unless the Guide for Authors states otherwise, use the past tense; the present tense is usually only used in methodology-type papers.
Results

The main findings of the research

DO
• Use figures and tables to summarize data
• Show the results of statistical analysis
• Compare “like with like”

DON’T
• Duplicate data among tables, figures and text
• Use graphics to illustrate data that can easily be summarized with text
“Readers… often look at the graphics first and many times go no further. Therefore, the reviewer should be particularly sensitive to inclusion of clear and informative graphics.”

– Henry Rapoport, Associate Editor, Journal of Organic Chemistry
Figures and tables are the most effective way to present results

**BUT:**

• Captions should be able to stand alone, such that the figures and tables are understandable without the need to read the entire manuscript

• The data represented should be easy to interpret

• Colour should only be used when necessary
The information in the table can be presented in one sentence:

‘The surface soils were dark grayish brown, grading to light olive brown (woodland), light olive brown (wetland), and pale olive (grassland) at 100 cm.’

Summarize results in the text where possible.
The figure and table show the same information, but the table is more direct and clear.
Graphics

- Legend is poorly defined
- Graph contains too much data
- No trend lines
Legend is well defined but there is still too much data and no trendlines.
• Legend is clear
• Data is better organized
• Trend lines are present
• Indicate the statistical tests used with all relevant parameters
  mean ± SD
• Give numerator and denominators with percentages
  40% (100/250)
• Use means and standard deviations to report normally distributed data
• Use medians and interpercentile ranges to report skewed data

• Report $P$ values
  
  $p=0.0035$ rather than $p<0.05$

• The word “significant” should only be used to describe “statistically significant differences”
Discussion

Describe

- How the results relate to the study’s aims and hypotheses
- How the findings relate to those of other studies
- All possible interpretations of your findings
- Limitations of the study

Avoid

- Making “grand statements” that are not supported by the data
  
  Example: “This novel treatment will massively reduce the prevalence of malaria in the third world”

- Introducing new results or terms
In the present study, rotenone treatment caused significant apoptosis in SAS cells, as demonstrated by flow cytometric detection of sub-G\textsubscript{1} DNA content, TUNEL labeling, DNA fragmentation, caspase-3 activation, and PARP cleavage. Shimizu et al. suggested that rotenone and other inhibitors of mitochondrial electron transport do not cause apoptosis, but induce necrotic cell death [11]. However, others have shown that cells treated with rotenone undergo apoptosis [12]. The ability of rotenone to induce apoptosis or necrosis may depend upon the cell type studied, since cellular demise by apoptotic mechanisms occurs readily in many cell types, but in other cells is more difficult to induce [13].
Conclusion

Put your study into **CONTEXT**

Describe how it represents an advance in the field

Suggest future experiments

**BUT**

Avoid repetition with other sections

Avoid being overly speculative

Don’t over-emphasize the impact of your study
In summary, findings from the present study are in general accordance with previous studies that suggest…. There is a need to establish dose-dependent effects of EPA and DHA separately and in different population groups. If findings from this study are applicable to consumption of fish, then intake at the upper level of the current UK guideline range [42] may not influence cardiovascular risk factors in fairly healthy, normolipidemic and middle-aged males.
Acknowledgements

Acknowledge anyone who has helped you with the study, including:

• Researchers who supplied materials or reagents, e.g. vectors or antibodies
• Anyone who helped with the writing or English, or offered critical comments about the content
• Anyone who provided technical help

State why people have been acknowledged and ask their permission

Acknowledge sources of funding, including any grant or reference numbers
Check the Guide for Authors for the correct format

Check

• Spelling of author names
• Punctuation
• Number of authors to include before using “et al.”
• Reference style

Avoid

• Personal communications, unpublished observations and submitted manuscripts not yet accepted
• Citing articles published only in the local language
• Excessive self-citation and journal self-citation
Bibliography: QuikBib

QuikBib allows you to generate a reference list (bibliography) from your selected documents in a variety of widely used output styles.

2

Bibliography: Choose your preferences and click Create.

Format: HTML

Style:

APA - American Psychological Association, 5th Edition

APA - American Psychological Association, 5th Edition

BibTeX

Council of Biology Editors - CBE 6th, Citation-Sequence

Chicago 15th Edition (Author-Date System)

Harvard

Harvard - British Standard

MLA - MLA Editio...
Supplementary material

Information related to and supportive of the main text, but of secondary importance

Includes:

• Microarray data
• Sequence data
• Method validation
• Additional controls
• Video data

Will be available online when the manuscript is published
Writing a quality manuscript

• Language
The three “C”s

Good writing possesses the following three “C”s:

• Clarity
• Conciseness
• Correctness (accuracy)

The key is to be as brief and specific as possible without omitting essential details
Good writing avoids the following traps:

- Repetition
- Redundancy
- Ambiguity
- Exaggeration

These are common annoyances for editors
Your manuscript is precious, invest in it

- Specialist scientific and medical editing services are commercially available to polish the language in your manuscript prior to journal submission
- Rates start from $8 per page

More information can be found on the Elsevier website at:
http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/languagepolishing
Recommended companies include:

- Edanz Editing
- Liwen Bianji
- International Science Editing
- Asia Science Editing
- SPI Publisher Services
- Diacritech Language Editing Service

Use of an English-language editing service listed here is not mandatory, and will not guarantee acceptance for publication in Elsevier journals.
Writing a quality manuscript

• Technical details
Abbreviations

• Define non-standard abbreviations on first use in both the abstract and the main text
• Check the Guide for Authors for a list of standard abbreviations that don’t need defining
• Don’t abbreviate terms used only once or twice in the entire manuscript – spell these out in full
• Acronyms: capitals not required in the definition unless a proper noun or start of a sentence

ubiquitin proteasome system (UPS)
"NOT"
Ubiquitin Proteasome System (UPS)
Cover letter

• This is your chance to speak to the editor directly
• Keep it brief, but convey the particular importance of your manuscript to the journal
• Suggest potential reviewers

This is your opportunity to convince the journal editor that they should publish your study, so it is worth investing time at this stage
Include:

• Editor name – Address to journal editor, not generic
• First sentence – provide title, author list and journal name
• Briefly describe:
  • your research area and track record
  • the main findings of your research
  • the significance of your research
• Confirm the originality of the submission
• Confirm that there are no competing financial interests
Revisions and Response to Reviewers
Revision before submission can prevent early rejection  
What can I do to ensure my paper is in the best possible state prior to submission?

• Ask colleagues to take a look and be critical
• Check that everything meets the requirements set out in the Guide for Authors – again!
• Check that the scope of the paper is appropriate for the selected journal – change journal rather than submit inappropriately
Revision before submission can prevent early rejection

What can I do to ensure my paper is in the best possible state prior to submission?

• If necessary, get a colleague or approved editing service to improve the language and ensure that the manuscript possesses the three “C”s

• Ensure that the literature cited is balanced and that the aims and purpose of the study, and the significance of the results, are clear

• Use a spellchecker
Post-referee revision

Carefully study the reviewers’ comments and prepare a detailed letter of response

• Respond to all points; even if you disagree with a reviewer, provide a polite, scientifically solid rebuttal rather than ignore their comment

• Provide page and line numbers when referring to revisions made in the manuscript

• Perform additional calculations, computations, or experiments if required; these usually serve to make the final paper stronger
The reviewer is clearly ignorant of the work of Bonifaci et al. (2008) showing that the electric field strength in the ionization zone of the burned corona is less than the space charge free field before the corona onset….

Thank you for your comment. However, we feel that the assumption in our model is supported by recent work by Bonifaci et al. (2008), who showed that the electric field strength in the ionization zone of the burned corona is less than the space charge free field before the corona onset
Post-referee revision

• State specifically what changes you have made to address the reviewers’ comments, mentioning the page and line numbers where changes have been made.

• Avoid repeating the same response over and over; if a similar comment is made by multiple people explain your position once and refer back to your earlier response in responses to other reviewers or the editor.
Reviewer’s Comments: It would also be good to acknowledge that geographic routing as you describe it is not a complete routing solution for wireless networks, except for applications that address a region rather than a particular node. Routing between nodes requires further machinery, which detracts from the benefits of geographic routing, and which I don’t believe you have made practical.

Author’s reply: We agree and will add an appropriate caveat. Note that for data-centric storage (name-based exact-match and range queries for sensed events), the storage and query processing mechanisms "natively" address packets geographically – without a "node-to-location" database.

Dr. Ramesh Govindan,
Professor, Computer Science Department, University of Southern California
Accepting rejection

Don’t take it personally!

• Try to understand why the paper has been rejected
• Evaluate honestly – will your paper meet the journal’s requirements with the addition of more data or is another journal more appropriate?
• Don’t resubmit elsewhere without significant revisions addressing the reasons for rejection and checking the new Guide for Authors
Accepting rejection

• Suggested strategy for submitting elsewhere:

• In your cover letter, declare that the paper was rejected and name the journal
• Include the referees’ reports and show how each comment has been addressed
• Explain why you are submitting the paper to this journal; is it a more appropriate journal?
Ethical Issues
Unethical behavior “can earn rejection and even a ban from publishing in the journal”

Terry M. Phillips, Editor, *Journal of Chromatography B*

Unethical behavior includes:

- Multiple submissions
- Redundant publications
- Plagiarism
- Data fabrication and falsification
- Improper use of human subjects and animals in research
- Improper author contribution
Multiple submissions save your time but waste editors’

The editorial process of your manuscripts will be completely stopped if the duplicated submissions are discovered

“It is considered to be unethical…We have thrown out a paper when an author was caught doing this. I believe that the other journal did the same thing”

James C. Hower, Editor, *International Journal of Coal Geology*
Redundant publication

An author should not submit for consideration in another journal a previously published paper

- Published studies do not need to be repeated unless further confirmation is required
- Previous publication of an abstract during the proceedings of conferences does not preclude subsequent submission for publication, but full disclosure should be made at the time of submission
Redundant publication

• Re-publication of a paper in another language is acceptable, provided that there is full and prominent disclosure of its original source at the time of submission.

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Federal Office of Science and Technology Policy, 1999
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Bruce Railsback, Professor, Department of Geology, University of Georgia

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DON’T DO IT!

Unacceptable paraphrasing, even with correct citation, is considered plagiarism
Paraphrasing

- **Original (Gratz, 1982):**
  Bilateral vagotomy resulted in an increase in tidal volume but a depression in respiratory frequency such that total ventilation did not change.

- **Restatement 1:**
  Gratz (1982) showed that bilateral vagotomy resulted in an increase in tidal volume but a depression in respiratory frequency such that total ventilation did not change.

Ronald K. Gratz. *Using Other’s Words and Ideas.* Department of Biological Sciences, Michigan Technological University
Paraphrasing

- **Original (Buchanan, 1996):**
  What makes intentionally killing a human being a moral wrong for which the killer is to be condemned is that the killer did this morally bad thing not inadvertently or even negligently, but with a conscious purpose – with eyes open and a will directed toward that very object.

- **Restatement 2:**
  Buchanan (1996) states that we condemn a person who intentionally kills a human being because he did a "morally bad thing" not through negligence or accident but with open eyes and a direct will to take that life.

Ronald K. Gratz. *Using Other’s Words and Ideas.*
Department of Biological Sciences, Michigan Technological University
Data fabrication and falsification

- Fabrication is making up data or results, and recording or reporting them.
- Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, processes; or changing / omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.

“The most dangerous of all falsehoods is a slightly distorted truth”

G.C. Lichtenberg (1742–1799)
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Authors should meet conditions 1, 2, and 3. Those who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project should be acknowledged or listed as contributors. Check the Guide for Authors and ICMJE guidelines: http://www.icmje.org/
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– Nigel John Cook, Editor-in-Chief, *Ore Geology Reviews*
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