SUBMITTING A GOOD RESEARCH PAPER TO IJPP

INTRODUCTION

Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology (IJPP) is the official publication of Association of Physiologists and Pharmacologists of India (APPI). It is an international journal in physiology and pharmacology and allied sciences as it is indexed in PubMed and Index Medicus, in addition to its indexing in EMBASE, MEDLINE, Biological Abstracts, Biosis and Excerpta Medica. Therefore, getting a research paper published in IJPP is a scholarly achievement for a medical scientist. IJPP publishes all kinds of paper like review articles, research papers in the form of original articles and short communications, letters to the editor and invited (guest) editorials in the field of physiology and pharmacology and allied sciences. Most of the papers published in IJPP are from physiology pharmacology and allied sciences. As physiology is an integral part of clinical medicine, papers from other disciplines such as biochemistry, pathology, pharmacology, ophthalmology, gynecology, medicine, cardiology, neurology, nephrology, yoga etc. have the scope of being published in IJPP. Physiology of today is no more the physiology of yesterday. Physiology is rapidly emerging as a subject of clinical interest. Therefore, the scope of research in physiology has increased enormously in recent years. Any research work in physiology with some application in medicine has a better chance to appear in IJPP, rather than a pure basic research without a good hypothesis. In fact, papers submitted to IJPP for publication have been found to be mainly of ‘clinical research’ type.

In last one year of our editorship, we have observed a few problems in finalizing the papers for publication in IJPP. This is mainly due to the lack of quality papers, although we have received a quite a good number of papers for our journal. The quality of a paper depends on two major factors: the first and foremost is the novelty of the research work and second but essential is the quality of presentation. Though the editorial office has nothing much to do with the novelty of work, the way work is presented is scrutinized and modified by the editorial team. However, a poor quality work is rejected in the preliminary screening itself, though these numbers are few. Though works conducted in our Indian laboratories are good in their research hypothesis, design, and outcome, the manuscripts submitted for publication are not of good quality mostly because of poor presentation. A poorly presented article takes lot of time to be reviewed, modified, improved and re-presented, and finally, sometimes rejected for lack of adequate improvement in the final presentation that happens often due to poor compliance by the authors. Therefore, we thought that this editorial article will help our readers and contributors to improve the standard of their papers sent for publication to IJPP and speed up the process of publication.

THE FIRST STEP

Conducting a research work is a science whereas writing a paper for publication is an art (1). As without scientific approach, the work conducted has no merit, without proper presentation, the work done is not appreciated (2). Writing a paper and getting it published in a peer-reviewed PubMed indexed journal like IJPP is a methodical process. The publication format varies from journal to journal. Therefore, prior to submission of a paper in any journal, the authors must go through the ‘Instructions to Authors’ specific to that journal. Before submitting the paper to IJPP, please first go through
“Instructions for Authors”, which is usually published in detail in the first issue of each volume of IJPP. This can also be downloaded from our website: www.ijpp.com. One should read in detail the instructions for writing each section of a paper and accordingly prepare all the sections. It is better to refer to a recent issue of IJPP for the purpose, which is more informative apart from the instructions for authors. We have observed that some papers submitted to IJPP, are not at all presented in the format of IJPP. This happens mostly because authors submit the paper to IJPP that has already been rejected by some other international journal. Authors without making any change in the format, submit exactly the same paper to IJPP. With our past editorial experience, immediately we detect such papers. Even from the manuscript format sometimes we know the journal that has rejected the paper. A paper which is rejected and submitted to IJPP (without improvement and change in format) gives the bad impression of a reject-paper. Authors should note that a paper rejected by a journal should be thoroughly revised and amply improved in the light of the comments of the reviewers before being freshly submitted to any other journal.

A paper of IJPP has the following sections:
1. Title page
2. Abstract (that includes key words)
3. Introduction (that includes brief review of relevant literature)
4. Materials and Methods (that includes method of statistical analysis of data)
5. Results
6. Discussion
7. Acknowledgements (if any)
8. References

Title page
Title page should contain the title of article (in CAPS), name (in CAPS) and details of address of each author (Sentence case). The e-mail ID and contact number (preferably cell phone number) of corresponding author must be given. This facilitates the process of correspondence, decreases the postal expenses and hastens the process of publication. As most of our communications are made through e-mails, any change in e-mail ID should immediately be communicated to the editor. If the work includes involvement of clinical department, one co-author should be from the concerned department. This facilitates the acceptability of the work. For example, a work on cardiac functions that involves echocardiography or a work on fetal development that involves ultrasonography should have a coauthor from the department of cardiology/medicine or from obstetrics and gynecology. Absence of such coauthors not only weakens the authority of the work done, but also sometimes puts the question mark on authenticity of the work conducted. A ‘short running head’ should be given in the title page.

Abstract
This is the most important part of a manuscript for the reviewer because this alone indicates why he should go through the whole manuscript (3). Therefore, it should be written very carefully. Abstract should not be lengthy (should preferably be restricted to 250 words). It should clearly depict the purpose of the present study, brief methods, main results with level of significance (by depicting the P value), and outcome and application of the study. Though the abstract is not structured in IJPP, it should be prepared keeping in mind all these points. Many serious reviewers derive their conclusion on papers based on the quality of the abstract. Keywords may be given for indexing purpose.

Introduction
This is an important part of a manuscript that clearly mentions why the present work was taken up. This includes a brief review of previous works done on the same topic providing proper citations (relevant references). This must include the shortcomings in others’ studies pointing out their lacunae. It clearly mentions the purpose of the present work and novelty of the work. The introduction should be a concise one without unnecessary reference to many irrelevant works. Numbers of total references in the paper increase unnecessarily due to unwanted references in introduction. For example, if the work is on ‘Oxidative stress (OS) status in newly diagnosed hypertensive subjects’, introduction should not give a review of literature on oxidative stress citing about 15 references on how OS is generated in the body. The primary objective of the study is not to review the OS, rather to study the load OS in hypertensive patients. Hence, 2 to 3 recent and relevant references on OS will suffice. Rather, authors should provide the references for the works already conducted on OS in hypertension, and then highlight the deficiencies in these studies.
for which the present work was planned. This not only reduces the number of references, but increases the clarity on the objective of the study. Many authors do not do a proper review of other works on the topic or knowingly hide important works that have already been conducted on the topic, and promptly state that ‘no work has been conducted in this topic and therefore, we have studied’. Authors should remember that in this electronic era to check the novelty and originality of the work, a reviewer can always update the knowledge from PubMed at the time of review, and if he finds that already reports are available on the topic that are not quoted by the authors, immediately he rejects the paper. Hence, it is always wise not to hide any of the relevant information on the work performed by others. Often, designing and completing a research work takes more than one to two years during which few reports from other laboratories on the work may be published. Therefore, it is always ideal to re-review the literature on the topic afresh before preparing the manuscript for publication and accordingly write the introduction and discussion of the paper.

Materials and Methods

In this section, the methods used for conducting the experiment, the materials and instruments used for the study should be mentioned in detail with their references, source and manufacturer’s details. This is very important as using these experiments carried out in similar laboratory environment in any other part of the world, the work should be sufficiently reproducible. This emphasizes the validity of the work. The sample size, number of groups has to be described clearly in this section. Approval of Research Council and Ethics Committee (animal ethics or human ethics depending on the type of study) must be clearly noted. For human works, valid consent must have been obtained prior to the study and should have been mentioned in this section of the manuscript. The exclusion and inclusion criteria should be very precisely depicted. A small paragraph should be devoted for details of statistical analysis of the data. Method for comparison/correlation of data should clearly be noted. Please refer the editorial of first issue of IJPP, 2010, for details of presentation of statistical data in a research paper (4).

Results

In this section, the results are merely described without discussing or giving any conclusion. The results should be addressed according to their placement in corresponding tables and figures for better apprehension. For each data, mean±SD or mean±SE should be mentioned. Tables must not be made with external and internal line format. It should be just in the form of columns without any lines. This is important as it helps us to alter the size of the tables to suit to the space (size of the column) available in the journal. Title and foot note (in sentence case) of the table and figures should be as per IJPP format. Tables should not be repeated in figures. Figures should be drawn in tiff-format and a tiff-file of the figure should accompany the electronic submission of manuscript. This improves the quality of the picture.

Discussion

This part is a vital section of the manuscript, as it says how to approach the research questions addressed in line with the results obtained. The loopholes of previous studies can be readdressed here. Any negative result should have possible explanations to broaden the outlook (5). Discussion should mainly revolve around the current results rather than describing in detail others’ works. Undue discussions should be avoided. Appropriate citations should accompany the references to other works. There is no research work devoid of limitations, even when conducted in the best laboratories. Therefore, it is desirable to list the limitations of the work (instead of giving opportunity to reviewers to point out them) at the end of the discussion. A summary of discussion should ideally be noted in last one or two sentences.

Conclusion: Always there should be a conclusion in all ‘original articles’, which should appear as a separate subsection under ‘Discussion’ at the end. Conclusion should be strictly precise pertaining to the results obtained without adding any hypothetical versions. The application of the work may be highlighted in conclusion.

Acknowledgements

Funding agencies, technical help and assistance for designing and conducting the work and preparing the manuscript should be acknowledged at the end of the manuscript (after the ‘discussion’ section).
Undue acknowledgement to appease the authority or higher officials should be avoided in a research presentation.

References

Cite references in parenthesis (as number in normal bracket) in chronological order as they appear in the sequentially text of the manuscript. Please follow the pattern of references of IJPP. This is very important as many of our contributors are not strictly adhering to the pattern of reference of IJPP. All journal references should have the name of the authors, title of the work, journal name (abbreviated and italics), year of publication, volume and page numbers in the format of the references cited for this article. If there are more than six authors, after the name of three authors, et al should be written. An MD/PhD thesis submitted to university should not be cited as a reference. Reference for citation from a book should strictly be prepared in the IJPP format. Authors should refer a recent copy of IJPP for this purpose. Authors should know that their research and presentation standard is assessed from the quality and exactness of references they cite and present in their manuscript.

Language and spelling

Throughout the manuscript spelling and grammar mistakes should be avoided to make peer review easier. Too many common errors often irritate the reviewer, which may even sometimes leads to rejection of paper.

Declaration form

The paper must accompany the filled-in original copy of “Authors Declaration and Copyright Form” duly signed by all authors.

Copyright form can be downloaded from our website: www.ijpp.com. We found many authors are submitting papers online (electronic submission) without sending a hard copy of ‘Authors Declaration and Copyright Form’ and hard copies of the paper. On principle, we do not initiate registration and editorial processing of the paper, until we receive “Authors Declaration and Copyright Form” duly signed by all authors. Therefore, the submission of this is a must. Reviewing a manuscript on its hard copy is easier than doing the same on a computer screen. Therefore, submission of three hard copies should also be done immediately in addition to the electronic submission. The soft copy submitted online helps to easily incorporate the modifications suggested by the reviewers and if the changes suggested are minimal, the editorial office can do the same (without sending the paper back to the authors for revision) and finalize the paper for publication at the earliest.

It is nice to prepare a check list that will include requirements of the manuscript covering all sections as described above and please verify all the points in the check list at least once before submitting the manuscript. If a manuscript is well written and prepared in the format of IJPP, we are sure the processing will be easier and finalizing the paper for publication will be hastened. I sincerely thank our contributors for taking keen interest in our journal and I wish all of them a very best for their endeavors to get a paper published in IJPP. We wish that with all our sincere efforts to improve the quality of our journal, IJPP acquires the status of an impact factor journal in a near future.

DR. G. K. PAL, MD,
Editor (Physiology), IJPP,
Professor of Physiology,
JIPMER, Pondicherry – 605 006, India.
E-mails: physiologyeditorijpp@rediffmail.com; ijpp.physiol@yahoo.com

REFERENCES