Getting Published: What Journal Editors Really Want

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Presenter Disclosures

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Personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to medicine, within past 3 years:

“No relationships to disclose”
INTRODUCTION

- How to chose a journal for your manuscript
- Manuscript preparation
- Review process
- AJRCCM statistics
- Reading a rejection letter and response to an invitation for a revision
- When to contact the Editor or Associate Editor
How to Choose the Best Journal for Your Manuscript

- General versus subspecialty journal
  - Does the work have broad interest and implications? Then general journal, especially if degree of novelty is high
  - Is the focus of the work more limited (e.g., primarily relates to the lung or a pulmonary disease)? Then a subspecialty journal

- Is the manuscript basic, translational, or clinical?

- Degree of novelty – does the work challenge established paradigms and/or make a major advance to the field?
  - If so, higher impact factor journal
  - If data are more incremental, may be better to consider a slightly lower impact factor journal
Factors Increasing Chances of Acceptance to High Impact Journals

- Novel data that provide new insights into basic pathways in cellular function or into disease pathogenesis, diagnosis, or treatment

- Adequately powered clinical study with relevant and meaningful endpoints (e.g. survival, time on ventilator) – NEJM, JAMA, Lancet, Annals of Internal Medicine, AJRCCM

- Translational study with meaningful and clinically relevant endpoints (Nature Medicine, JCI, JEM)
  - Animal studies are fine
  - Basic cellular studies are also fine, but need to consider scope of journal (Nature, Science, Cell, Cell Metabolism, JBC, Journal of Immunology)
Clinical Trials

- Interventional studies need to be registered or will not be considered for publication
- Relevant primary and secondary endpoints
- Appropriate methodology (blinding, randomization, placebo-controlled, monitoring of compliance with protocol)
- Adequately powered - sufficiently large to achieve statistically significant results for primary endpoint
  - Power calculations provided
- CONSORT guidelines for clinical trials
  - How many patients enrolled
  - Number of patients eliminated from study and why
  - Number of patients analyzed
Human Studies

- Institutional Review Board approved and informed consent obtained
- Provide novel insights into cellular function, pathophysiologic processes, diagnosis or treatment
- If using a model in healthy volunteers, needs to be relevant to disease (e.g. bronchial instillation of LPS)
- If using patients, they should be representative of those with disease
- Appropriate study design and methodology (use relevant cell populations, patients studied at appropriate times in their clinical course, adequate follow-up, appropriate medical regimen)
- Adequately powered
Isolated Cell Studies in Translational or Clinically Focused Journals (JCI, JEM, AJRCCM)

- Should be cellular populations from humans or animals with disease.
- Can start with cells in culture, but need to extend findings to a human disease state or animal model.
Manuscript Preparation

- Carefully follow instructions for authors
- Clearly present the importance and implication of your results in the Abstract, Introduction, and Discussion
- State your hypothesis succinctly and clearly
- Use appropriate statistics
- Results section should be divided into appropriate sections to present your results in the most clear fashion
- Tables and figures should be clear and useful – do not repeat data in Results section and tables/figures
- Use online supplement appropriately – all methods and data don’t need to be in the manuscript
- Introduction and Discussion should not be too long
- Do not repeat results in Discussion – use Discussion to put your findings into context and to comment on their implications
Common Mistakes

- Manuscript not organized as detailed in instructions for authors
- Cover letter mentions the journal where manuscript previously submitted
- Improper statistics – t tests used when there are multiple groups
- Not providing numbers of individuals included in figures, tables
- Not providing number of times experiments repeated (for basic papers)
- Lack of CONSORT figure for clinical trials
Why are Manuscripts Accepted?

- Novel Information That Truly Advance the Field
- Innovative Approach
- Mechanistic
- Of Broad Interest to the Readership of the Journal
- Conclusions Are Relevant to the Readership of the Journal
- Results Reproduced Sufficient Number of Times
- Adequately Powered
What Manuscripts Do Editors Not Want?

- Not Novel
- Descriptive
- Too Small
- Limited Interest
- Limited Utility of the Findings to the Readership and to the Field
How Do You Know If Data Are Highly Novel?

- Similar or closely related information not previously published
- Provide new insights into the pathways affecting cellular or organ function or leading to disease
- Not incremental in terms of implications (i.e., could not necessarily be predicted from previous work)
- Need to clearly highlight the novelty and importance of the results in the Abstract, Introduction, and Discussion for the manuscript
“Mechanical” Issues that Improve the Likelihood of Manuscript Acceptance

- Manuscript well written – helpful to have a native English speaker review the article
- Abstract well organized and highlights the findings of the study
- Hypothesis clearly stated
- Short, focused introduction – why the experiments were done
- Clear and organized presentation of data
  - Subheadings in Results section are clear
  - Figures and tables present information in an organized and easily accessible manner
- Discussion is not overly long and clearly explains the importance of the data and puts the findings into context
- For a “basic” study, may help to have a final figure showing the mechanisms elucidated by the experiments and how they fit into previously described pathways
Specific Issues Affecting Acceptance

- Statistics properly done – appropriate test with correction for multiple comparisons

- Genetics
  - Rationale for single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) chosen, ideally with complete SNP selection
  - Functional significance
  - Validation population
Submission of the Manuscript

- Cover letter briefly summarizing the results and their implications. Should also state the financial interests of the authors and that the manuscript is not under consideration at other journals.

- Suggestion of potential reviewers

- Can mention individuals who should NOT review the manuscript

- Provide copies of manuscripts that have been submitted or are in press that are related to the topic of the present manuscript
AJRCCM Rejection Ratios (2008)

- Editor Direct Reject: 914 (10%)
- Deputy/Associate Editors Direct Reject: (12%)
- Reject with Reviewer(s)’ comments: 914
Reasons for Editor Direct Reject

- Case Studies that do not present highly novel insights into the pathophysiology, diagnosis, or treatment of pulmonary or critical care disorders.

- Clear lack of novelty.

- Only of limited interest (e.g. results from a single country that do not have generalizable implications).
Number of Reviewers Assigned per Manuscript

(Statistics based on 608 manuscripts submitted in 2009)

- 0 or 1 Reviewer: 65 (11%)
- 2 Reviewers: 173 (28%)
- 3 Reviewers: 287 (47%)
- 4 or more Reviewers: 83 (14%)
AJRCCM Review Considerations (I)

Please evaluate the manuscript on the basis of (1) HIGH to (5) LOW for each of the following:

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<tr>
<td>Creativity and originality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity and brevity</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Likely significance after revision</td>
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Recommendation:

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<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Accept as is</td>
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<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Accept with minor revision</td>
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<td>( )</td>
<td>Return for major revision</td>
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<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Reject</td>
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<td>Please mark applicable comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>( ) The study has ethical concerns</td>
<td>( ) Concerns about human or animal experimentation, including lack of documentation of informed consent or ethics approval.</td>
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<tr>
<td>( ) Top 25% of all manuscripts I have ever reviewed</td>
<td>( ) Bottom 50% of all manuscripts I have ever reviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) Statistical methods are problematic</td>
<td>( ) Findings represent only minor advance over previously published information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) Tables contain excessive information and/or need improvement</td>
<td>( ) Figures need improvement</td>
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### Journal of Immunology Review Considerations

<table>
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<td>Accept With Minor Revision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Originality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretations strongly supported by the data</td>
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<td>Biological significance</td>
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<td>Brevity and clarity</td>
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<td>Potential if revised</td>
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<td>Critique 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the manuscript have Supplemental Material? (Required)</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the Supplemental Material essential data that would be better incorporated into the text of the manuscript? (Required)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the quality of the data in the Supplemental Material meet the standards for acceptance to The JI? (Required)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the manuscript include an Extended Methods feature? (Required)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the Extended Methods feature describe techniques that are not standard procedures and have not been published elsewhere? (Required)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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AJRCCM Acceptance Rate
(2005 - 2009)
Citation Report for 360 Articles Published in AJRCCM
January 2007 - March 2008

Highest number of citations for single article
Average citations per article

Average citation in this time period: 11
AJRCCM Impact Factors
(2001-2008)
How to Read a Rejection Letter

- Try to read the letter dispassionately – we all love our work!

- Often contain summary/interpretation of reasons for rejection provided by the Editor or Associate Editor – may be very useful in rewriting the manuscript for another journal

- Look for wording about potential resubmission of manuscript if “extensive additional work performed” or similar language – implies that manuscript could be resubmitted to same journal

- If you really believe that the rejection is not appropriate, send a dispassionate rebuttal letter to the journal, detailing the issues with the review. Not generally helpful unless the reviewers made a mistake with interpreting your data – it doesn’t help to argue that your results are “more important” than the reviewers considered them to be or to criticize the expertise of the reviewers
When to Contact the Editor or Associate Editor and When NOT to Contact

- Await an appropriate length of time before contacting the journal office, NOT the Editor or Associate Editor, about delays in the review process.

- Contact the journal office, not the Editor or Associate Editor, for an extension in resubmitting a revision.

- Can contact the Editor to ask if a manuscript is appropriate for a journal.

- Can write to the Editor if there are objective reasons to believe that there was a mistake by a reviewer that resulted in a reject decision.

- If a revision is requested, can contact the Editor or Associate Editor for clarification about crucial studies or data analyses necessary to include in a revision.
How to Submit a Revision

- Changes should be noted in revised manuscript using either underlining or track changes.

- Provide a point-by-point letter:
  - Best if verbatim reviewers’ comments are used, followed by your response.
  - Provide page numbers where changes made.
  - Do not criticize the reviewer’s comment or expertise; always best to be polite and to respond in a positive manner to the comment.
  - Clearly explain why you chose not to change the manuscript in response to a reviewer’s suggestion.
CONCLUSIONS

- The manuscript should present your data clearly, with appropriate analyses, and should highlight your hypothesis as well as the significance and novelty of your results.

- The review process is a human and imperfect endeavor.

- There are multiple journals that are appropriate for your manuscript.

- Try to be objective in assessing your manuscript and also in interpreting the decision from the journal.

- Important manuscripts are recognized and cited, even if they don’t get published in the highest impact factor journals.

- Persistence in submitting a manuscript and writing additional manuscripts will always bring reward.