

## Rejection Hurts!

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I am frequently asked to speak at conferences on the topic of "What Journal Editors Want?" The subject is very timely as many academicians are pressured to conduct scholarly activity and publish their work in a peer-reviewed journal. Since the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* is one of the few peer-reviewed, scholarly dental hygiene journals, submissions have increased in recent years.

Let me begin by saying, good writing takes time, perseverance and patience. I have had my work rejected and any experienced author or researcher will share similar experiences. Some people are even of the opinion that if one has not had their papers rejected occasionally that they are not submitting their work to high quality journals! However, I will not lie....it hurts to receive a rejection notice. When one has spent endless hours working on a research project to get it "just right", it is difficult to receive any negative feedback.

Below are a few tips I emphasize in my presentations about publishing. Following these suggestions may benefit both new and seasoned authors to have a successful manuscript submission.

1. Read the statement of purpose for the various journals that may be appropriate for your work. Once you have chosen the journal you wish to submit your manuscript to, READ the Guidelines to Authors. Continue to refer to the guidelines throughout the manuscript preparation process.

I cannot tell you how many manuscripts never make it to the review process because the authors have not followed the author guidelines. Every journal is different and it is imperative to get the formatting, references, headings, tables and figures and word count correct. Failing to follow the directions gives the wrong impression. Editors do not want to waste reviewers' time by forwarding a manuscript that clearly does not follow the author directions. Volunteer reviewers are experts in their field and are the unsung heroes of the peer review process and their time is precious.

2. Ask yourself if your work is based on something that is new, innovative and advances the profession of dental hygiene? Does it contribute to a priority area of the National Dental Hygiene Research Agenda? Repeating existing work doesn't contribute to the unique body of knowledge and is not likely to generate a favorable review.
3. How is the English grammar and syntax in the manuscript? The majority of papers submitted to the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* have

minor to major recommendations for editing the grammar. Before an author submits a paper for publication, he/she should have at least two other professionals read and comment on the paper. These individuals should be known for their attention to detail and honesty.

4. Most likely, the submission will come back with required revisions from the reviewers. It is rare for a manuscript to be accepted on the first submission and some revisions may require significant work. You may not like what the reviewers have written or suggested and you may want to write nasty comments back to the reviewers. STOP! Take a break for several days and then revisit the reviewers' comments. Authors must respond to EVERY comment in a logical, methodical manner. Follow the directions of the journal pertaining to the reviewer response format. If you are unsure, call or email the editor. Clarify this process so it does not delay a second review. What if the paper is rejected? Look at the comments from the reviewers and decide if you want to make the changes to the paper and resubmit it to the same journal or another publication. In almost every case, authors can benefit from the constructive criticism from a reviewer.
5. If the journal has requested that revisions be completed in a certain timeframe, remember to adhere to the guidelines. If not, the paper will be considered a new submission and new reviewers will be assigned. This scenario will only delay the potential of getting the paper accepted for publication.
6. If you have questions about the process, do not hesitate to contact the editor or editorial staff. All questions are welcomed.
7. Finally, once the paper is accepted for publication... start writing again! The only way to become proficient at this process is to keep doing it.

The challenge is great and the personal and professional rewards are even greater.

Good Luck!!

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Wilder, RDH, BS, MS  
Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Dental Hygiene*

