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HOW TO PUBLISH YOUR IMPORTANT  
ADDICTION RESEARCH

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# Acknowledgements



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# What we will cover in this workshop



- ▶ Why are your papers important to science?  
How to choose a journal
  - ▶ Getting it right before you submit!  
Understand the process of submission and editing
  - ▶ Common problems with submissions!  
What editors want for their journals
- 

# Why are your papers important to science - what is the role of a scientific Journal?

- ▶ provides a forum for communication among scientists
  - ▶ sets intellectual standards in a field
  - ▶ sets the agenda for what to study
  - ▶ provides an institutional memory of a field
  - ▶ brings information to the public
  - ▶ certifies the author's work is authentic
  - ▶ can advance the author's career
- (Lafollette, 1992)

# The plethora of journals to choose from

- ▶ Over 95 (2015) peer-reviewed addiction journals
- ▶ Many more disciplinary journals publish addiction articles, psychology, medical science, sociology, public health, epidemiology, policy etc etc
- ▶ How does one make an informed choice?

# Questions to answer in choosing a journal

1. National or international audience?
2. Language?
3. Disciplinary or addiction specialty journals?
4. The journal's content area/culture?
5. Exposure opportunities?
6. Chances of acceptance?
7. What about the impact factor?
8. Practical matters (time to publication, etc.)



# . National or international audience?

Is the topic relevant to a particular national audience, such as clinicians, basic scientists or policymakers? Does it present data that is primarily of local or national interest? If so, consider a journal whose audience or language is national in scope

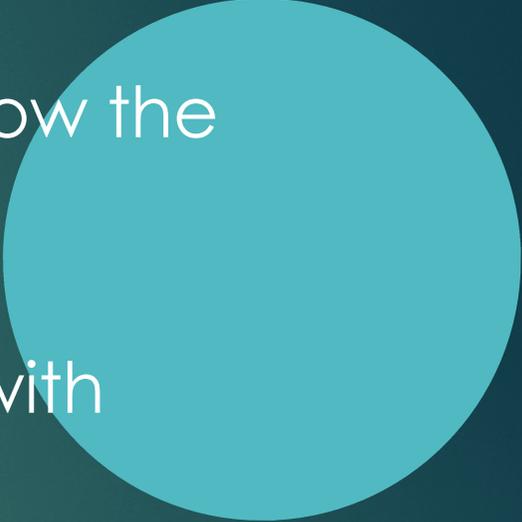
OR

Does the article deal with universal biological, psychological or sociological themes that are relevant to scientists or practitioners all over the world? If so, consider an international journal or a well-indexed English language journal.

- ▶ To find out about the journal's focus: READ its mission statement, look at content and evaluate its editorial board

# Which language?



- For international audience: English is now the language of choice
  - Option: Publish in several languages (with editors' permission)
  - For national audiences: publish in the language of the country
- 

# Disciplinary or addiction specialty journal?

- ▶ Sometimes it is easier to get an addiction article published in an addiction journal
- ▶ In some countries with no specialty journal, other channels have to be considered, such as the national disciplinary journals
- ▶ Addiction scientists benefit from contact with other (“mother”) sciences, so disciplinary journals are important
- ▶ Some disciplinary journals have more prestige than specialty journals
- ▶ If you are not sure about where to submit: contact the editor

# Consider the journal's content area and culture

- ▶ Consult mission statement for topics, goals, policy, audience
- ▶ Get acquainted with the journal's "format" for articles, subject matter, methodological rigor, etc
- ▶ See who is on the editorial board

# What is the journal's exposure?

- ▶ Does it reach your specific audience: researchers, clinicians, basic scientists, policymakers?
- ▶ Perhaps members of a certain professional society?
- ▶ How available is the journal in the important libraries?
- ▶ Consider print circulation: among English language journals, circulation varies: 250 - 25 000; among non-English journals: 400 - 3 200. However, remember that now most journals survive on the papers they "sell" through searches by computer and not through hard copy
- ▶ Abstracting and indexing services recording the journal: great variation, but generally larger among English language journals
- ▶ Impact factor: Only available for English language journals

# Consider your chances of being accepted?

- ▶ Acceptance rates: English language: 15 - 95%, non-English: 25 - 100%
- ▶ Note: many journals do not know their acceptance rates or do not want to state them
- ▶ Acceptance depends on quality and style of the article, originality and administrative resources of the journal (some journals may help with text and language editing)

# Consider these practical aspects:



- ▶ How long to get the article peer reviewed?
  - ▶ How long between acceptance and publication?
  - ▶ Geographical distribution (i.e. penetration outside US and Europe)
  - ▶ Special audiences
  - ▶ How much editorial support does it give?
- 

# Consider, but do not be fooled by, the Journal Impact Factor (JIF)

- ▶ JIF is determined by the frequency at which articles in that journal were cited
- ▶ High impact journals have more prestige, but JIF depends on other things, like number of co-authors and indexing
- ▶ Non-English journals are at a disadvantage
- ▶ The number of databases indexing the journal will determine who sees abstract of article

# The Journal Impact Factor



The average citation frequency for articles published in a journal, or how many times, on average, during the study year the articles that appeared the 2 preceding years of that journal received citations in other (ISI) indexed journals



# The Importance of Diversity



- ▶ “Addiction is a field in which it is difficult to conduct research with the level of control one would wish, because of practical and ethical constraints” (West & McIlwaine, 2002)
  - ▶ This leads to genuine disagreement about measures and research designs
  - ▶ Addiction research is multi-disciplinary which will foster disagreements about the importance of particular findings
- 

# Conclusions



- ▶ There are many opportunities
- ▶ Choose your publication channel wisely
- ▶ Improve the quality of publishing by making all journals compete for your best articles

# Getting it right before you submit!

- ▶ This is a stage by stage process of writing and submitting your paper
- ▶ The paper will only be as good as the content and the methods you have chosen
- ▶ **Remember** to read the authors guidelines which are on the website page of every journal
- ▶ Getting simple things wrong like a referencing style or spacing or not anonymising etc will delay the process and frustrate the editor
- ▶ Do not annoy the editor!!

# Qualitative research: A caution



If your chosen journal publishes little qualitative research (QR) then special care is needed to prevent a rough ride from reviewers (and even editors).



- ▶ Be sure that the very latest work on rigor in QR is in your paper and solidly linked to your methods and analyses.
- ▶ As well, read Chapter 6 on QR for excellent insights on how to write about QR in addiction science.

# Contact your chosen journal

- ▶ Send an email to your journal of choice with the paper's title and the abstract and ask if it is of interest.
- ▶ Also ask any awkward questions (flexibility on paper length, typical times for the peer review process) that may influence your decision on where to submit your paper.
- ▶ If the response is favourable, you can begin writing.
- ▶ If unfavourable, look for another journal. Ask colleagues for their advice, and always consult Chapter 3 of *Publishing Addiction Science*, which lists descriptive information of many addiction journals.

# The importance of originality

- ▶ Too many researchers fail to make clear what is the original contribution of a paper. Science journals exist primarily to publish original knowledge.
- ▶ Describe what is original about your analyses in your initial letter to the editor. It should be evident in the Title (if possible), and the Abstract. It should also be described in the Introduction and in the Discussion (and/or Conclusion).

# Title



Remember the title is crucial in the dissemination of your paper. This is what will show up in searches so it needs to describe the research issue and the importance of the paper

Write a title in the same style as other titles for your chosen journal. If unsure, read the Table of Contents for several issues to see what is current practice and style.

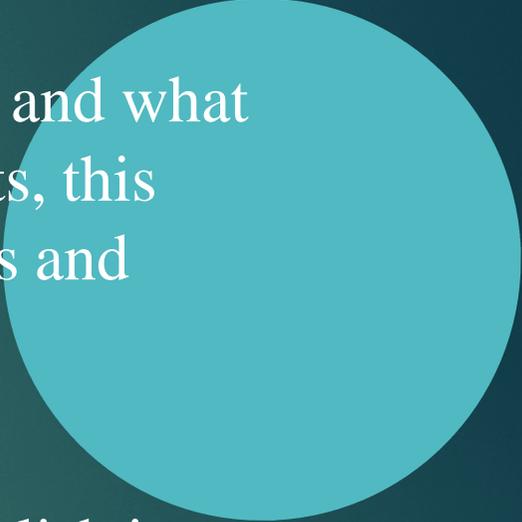
Avoid trendy and cute titles are soon outdated and will be embarrassing to have in your CV.

# Abstract



## **Abstract:**

This summarizes how you carried out your research and what you learned. Use, if possible, a structured abstracts, this has become established practice for many journals and makes it easier to write and understand



**Mistakes to avoid:** Do not go beyond what you establish in your paper, no non-significant results, no speculation, no telegraphic style, stay within the word count limit.

# Literature review (Introduction)

The conflicting goals of comprehensiveness and brevity make literature reviews difficult. Online help such as *Publishing Addiction Science* is available and recommended. Include all relevant citations for each measure, Methods, Procedures, and Results. Ask yourself “If I were challenged to support why I chose this [measure, method, statistic] what citations will support my choice?”

Do not use many references to support each point, one or two is sufficient.

Go from the general point of the research area to the specific so the end of the introduction should be the refined research question.

# Method

After reading this section, another researcher should be able to duplicate your research with another sample. Ask a colleague whether she could do this. With randomized control trials, editors may refer you to the Consort Statement for high standards and uniform methods.

Mistakes to avoid: Any suboptimal aspect of your methods should be followed by “see the Limitations section” and deal with it there. Do not try to hide or disguise poor methods; experienced reviewers will pounce!

# Results

Here you describe the outcome(s) from your research. Verify that original findings to be discussed later are included. Include all the findings but without discussion of them at this point.

Mistakes to avoid: This section lends itself to over-writing, (it should be a report of what you have found) and underwriting, (not explaining fully what you have found).

Do not report non-significant results, do not say approaching significant or almost significant. If results are not significant they should be reported as such.

# Discussion



Describe the place your results hold within addiction science (Per the lit review? Policy issues? New issues poorly addressed by others?) Cite the issues you included in the introduction but do not introduce new literature unless your findings confirm something unexpected. This is where your paper needs to explain those results thoroughly.

Mistakes to avoid: Limit speculation, outline future research in 1 or 2 lines. It is been trite to say that “...more research is needed”: of course, it’s always needed.

# Conclusions



It is now common to finish the paper with a brief section of conclusions, this is the place to reiterate the main findings and to show how important they are for the topic you are researching.

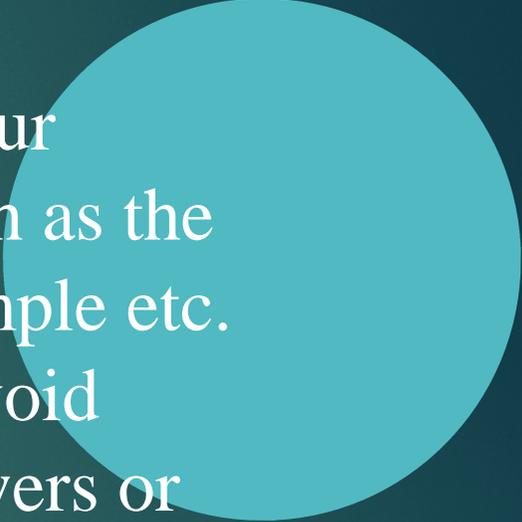


It is the opportunity to finish the paper by saying how important your research is!

# Limitations



Describe briefly the suboptimal aspects of your research. Most research has limitations such as the population researched or the size of the sample etc. Don't apologise, but if you try to hide or avoid limitations it will be picked up by reviewers or the editor.



# Appendices, tables and figures

Do not include too many figures or tables. Remember the editor will have a page budget and the reader will not want to go through endless figures or tables. Only include those which are important for understanding the paper. A maximum of 5 of either should be sufficient.

Check with the editor about appendices (number, length) for decisions here can influence your text.

Mistakes to avoid: It's easy to include too many pages as appendices. This is not so important if it is only to be published on line but important for hard copy versions.

Some papers are submitted with supplementary files. The same applies to these as to appendices.

# References

Keep in mind that the role of a reference list is to allow any reader to retrace all of the evidence that you cite. It must therefore be complete and accurate, In the text should either be just the surname of the authors (if more than two first author plus et al and date) for the APA style and just the number of the reference as it appears in the reference list for the Vancouver style.

In the reference list if it is APA style then they should be in alphabetical order from the surname of the first author, in the Vancouver style it should be the order in which they appear in the text. The references should be full and not two authors plus et al unless there is a very large number of authors for the paper cited.

Verify if foreign language titles require translation. If they do, translate them in the first copy sent to the editor.

# Feedback before submission



Always ask colleagues or a friend to read the paper before you submit it. Even experienced authors and researchers can make mistakes which they fail to see on rereading the paper because of familiarity. Other people seeing it freshly will pick up mistakes and non-sequiters!



# The process of submitting

Journals have a duty to avoid wasting referee time and undue delays in responding to authors

Final decisions depend on:-

- ▶ Importance or originality
- ▶ Reviewers concerns
- ▶ Fatal flaws
- ▶ Journal philosophy
- ▶ Space available
- ▶ Editorial work required



# Triage: Rejection Before Peer Review

## Reasons for instant rejections

- ▶ Outside the scope of the journal
- ▶ Manuscript type unacceptable
- ▶ Ignores Instructions to Authors
- ▶ Major methodological weaknesses (eg too few subjects)
- ▶ Clear ethical problems
- ▶ Purely descriptive, parochial, no hypotheses, no conclusions.
- ▶ Statistical analysis lacking
- ▶ Nothing new in it.

# Comply with Details of Instructions to Authors

Indicate the problem that is addressed at the outset

- ▶ Ensure the Introduction summarises previous work adequately
- ▶ State the objectives of the work
- ▶ Doing something that has been not been done before is not enough, why does it need to be done?
- ▶ State the hypotheses to be tested, how will they be tested outline the plan of work
- ▶ Don't include conclusions in the Introduction.

# Instructions to Authors: 2. Methods

Convince readers the methods are valid. Study the Methods sections of recent published papers using similar techniques

- ▶ Recruitment procedures
- ▶ Inclusion/exclusion criteria
- ▶ Reference previous use of measuring instruments and techniques
- ▶ Don't just say what you did, explain why you did it that way (eg how drug doses were chosen)
- ▶ Include as much data as possible in the space
- ▶ Specify statistical methods and software used

# Common Problems with Results Sections



- ▶ Results are mixed with descriptions of methods and conclusions and not related to the questions asked.
- ▶ Claims are made but the data are not shown.
- ▶ Data are not described just the results of the statistical analysis.
- ▶ Boring to read because the important findings are left to the end and not emphasised enough.
- ▶ Insufficient graphical representation, try to make figures understandable without reading the text.
- ▶ Excessive detail in tables and figures, obscures the message and wastes space, do not duplicate

# Common Data Analysis Issues



- ▶ Failure to deal adequately with confounding variables
- ▶ Claims to find something without a directly supporting statistical test
- ▶ Inappropriate conclusions for 'non significant' associations/ differences
- ▶ Failure to control for multiple comparisons

# Common Problems with Discussions

- ▶ Opening paragraph is only a summary of results – select main data and emphasise 2-3 important conclusions in relation to the data
- ▶ Does not focus on aims as stated in the introduction
- ▶ Does not place findings in context of previous knowledge – every paragraph should compare and contrast your data with relevant previous findings indicating what is new and what is confirmatory
- ▶ Addresses too many issues and is too long
- ▶ Does not consider alternative interpretations or acknowledge major limitations of the work
- ▶ Descends into politics and polemics
- ▶ Wastes space discussing trends

# Responding to Referee Reports

*If you don't want to make any of the changes take a break and look at it again another day!*

- ▶ Construct a detailed reply to referees, Reply with numbered sections responding to referees points.
- ▶ Make revisions to dealn with the major criticisms, then explain why you have not dealt with the rest.
- ▶ Describe each change you make, refer the reader to the relevant page in the revised manuscript.
- ▶ Highlight changes in the text in a different colour.
- ▶ If there are important or major changes recommende that you are absolutely sure are wrong, present a polite, logically argued rebuttal

## Responding to Referee Reports

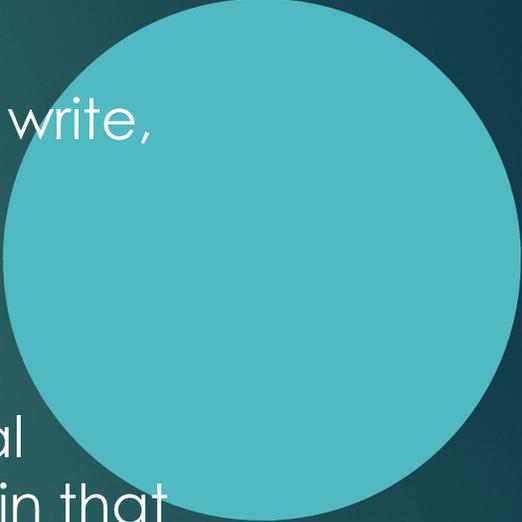
*Engender trust: never claim to have made changes when you have not done so!*

- ▶ If you have made major changes by rewriting whole sections of the paper state that you have done so.
- ▶ If you have just inserted or deleted a few words make clear which words by track changes so that referees can see something has been done.
- ▶ If you are asked to shorten something , do so, at least by some extent and state by how much.

# Responding to Referee Reports

- ▶ Keep your reply as short as possible eg 1-3 single spaced pages. If the referee writes 3 lines and you need a page to rebut it, your argument will not be convincing.
- ▶ If the referee cannot understand your point try to see how the misunderstanding has arisen and make changes so it will not happen again – *If one person does not follow what you have written the same may apply to other people.*
- ▶ Answer questions raised by the referee in the manuscript not in the cover letter.

# Responding to Referee Reports



- ▶ Spend a significant amount of time getting your reply to referees as near perfect as you can.
- ▶ Maximise and stress agreements with what they write, acknowledge their contribution.
- ▶ Minimise disagreements (but not to the point of dishonesty)
- ▶ If you feel a referee shows a bias to a theoretical approach that differs from yours, you can explain that there are different approaches, that yours is equally valid, there is a genuine difference of opinion and you have a different but scientifically legitimate view. Don't do this unless you have a strong case.



Thank you and good  
luck!