

What Journal Editors Are Looking For

I was asked to speak at the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) in March on the topic of “What Journal Editors Are Looking For.” With the increased emphasis on research and scholarship in the academic environment, as well as the need for our private practice members to share their knowledge in clinical dentistry with the dental community, the topic is timely. Just as a reference for you, when I assumed the role of Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Prosthodontics* on April 1, 2003 (come on, it was April Fool’s Day—what was I thinking?), we were receiving approximately 70 to 80 manuscripts annually to review and publish in our quarterly journal, and our ultimate acceptance rate was quite high, as many submissions were rewritten to assist the authors. In 2012, we received 523 manuscripts (an all-time record, and over 200 more than in 2011), and are on target for 2013 to receive over 600 manuscripts. Our acceptance rate for 2012 was 25%, where it’s stood for a few years now. So, with a rejection rate at 75%, the topic of “What Journal Editors Are Looking For” might better be discussed as “What Journal Editors Are NOT Looking For.”

Tops on the list of the types of submissions we’d like to receive are systematic reviews (like the Cochrane Collaboration reviews), meta-analyses, and randomized, controlled clinical trials (RCTs); but in prosthodontics, let’s be honest—these are few and far between. Next on the list would be any clinical trials of value—nonrandomized clinical trials, cross-sectional studies, retrospective cohort studies, and others. However, for all of these patient-related research initiatives, we require (as do most journals now), Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, to make sure the trials were conducted in an acceptable fashion to protect the patients involved. Then, we receive a plethora of in vitro basic science manuscripts, and we pride ourselves on the caliber of those manuscripts that ultimately get published. Sure, we still accept and publish educational research, topics of interest, techniques and technologies, and clinical reports, but even these must meet our stringent requirements.

Fundamental to all submissions, it is imperative that authors read, and follow (but particularly read) the guidelines to authors. I cannot tell you how many manuscripts never make it to the reviewers because the authors haven’t followed our specific guidelines—it’s more than a few every month. I would submit that this applies to nearly EVERY dental journal—and, we are all different in our guidelines for submission. So, carefully consider the journal you would like to submit to, and adhere to that particular journal’s submission guidelines.

Additionally, if you want to publish your work, you should work diligently to come up with something that is new, innovative, novel, or that furthers the science and discipline of prosthodontics. For example, how many articles have been published on post/cores (according to PubMed, over 850)? Do any of us truly believe there is anything new, novel, or exciting about post and cores? The same is true of clinical reports—they need to demonstrate something new or innovative, something that has not been published before, in order to teach our readers an innovative way to handle a particular clinical problem. Repeating existing work simply won’t get you a favorable review in 2013.

Next, the English grammar and syntax should be such that we can actually read (and understand) what’s been written. This is not often the case, and we’ve hired an editor who does just that—assists authors with rewrites due to language barriers that many authors face. Additionally, our publisher, Wiley-Blackwell, has an Author Services function that assists authors in a similar fashion. That being the case, the article **MUST** be something we want to publish **BEFORE** we’ll invest the time, and valuable resources, in a rewrite.

And finally, the manuscript should be related to prosthodontics—yes, we get the occasional submission that has little, or nothing, to do with our Specialty or discipline. However, we always take the time to provide the authors with some feedback, both positive and negative, to allow them to revise their work, and ultimately submit it to the appropriate journal (we even suggest other submission sites). All in all, I believe our Section Editors, as well as our Editorial Review Board (ERB) members, do an outstanding job helping authors improve their submissions for publication, regardless of whether we publish it, or recommend it to a different journal.

As you can see, the *Journal of Prosthodontics*, *YOUR* journal, has taken great steps to improve our working relationship with our publisher, and with our authors. We believe what we publish is truly the best of all the submissions, and we continually strive to improve our journal, and to further the art and science of Prosthodontics. So, if you review our masthead, and know some of our Section Editors and ERB members, take a minute to thank them for their diligent efforts to continually advance the journal on your behalf. It’s truly a “labor of love.”

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