PUBLISHING YOUR FINDINGS

Research is all about sharing your findings with others so that they can benefit from the new knowledge you have discovered. It also gives your project findings the opportunity to be critically evaluated, reproduced and thus gains validity. The way to reach the widest audience is to publish your findings in a reputable journal.

WHY PUBLISH?

- To share the results of your research with others, which may help with their own research
- To allow your colleagues to criticise your research, therefore potentially giving it validity
- To use as a basis for future research
- To gain recognition in a particular sphere, or establish ownership of an idea or principle
- For your own sense of achievement and satisfaction
- To enhance promotion prospects.

YOUR CHOICE OF JOURNAL AND READERSHIP

Choosing a journal is an important first step; you must consider your audience. Ensure you have targeted an appropriate journal for your publication. If the information you would want to publish is of interest to physiotherapists, your target publication would be read by physiotherapists. You need to consider will publication in your chosen journal achieve the result you want? Is your article more suited to a specialist journal or a multi-disciplinary one? Decide whether you want to publish in a monthly, quarterly, annual or even bi-annual journal. Will your article still be relevant to your readers by the time it is in print? Do you want to reach a local community with your article, or a much wider audience in which case a national journal would be a better choice than a regional one? Some journals have a time lag from acceptance of articles to publication of six months plus. Once you have chosen the desired publication read a few back numbers to get an idea of the content of the articles submitted. Write your article in a style acceptable to your recipients, your colleagues may understand your technical jargon, but if your readership consists of readers with less medical knowledge they may not understand and their attention will be lost. Accuracy, clarity and a skilful use of words will all help to make the article interesting and readable.

DECIDING WHAT TO PUBLISH

A journal article is very different from a dissertation or a research monograph. It is unlikely that the findings of a large research project that is multi faceted can be condensed into one acceptable article. It would probably be better to publish as several separate. Each article should have a self-contained point; this point should be clearly stated in the introduction and conclusion with the article using only relevant material that supports the key argument and conclusion.

THE ARTICLE

Once you have decided on which journal to submit your article to you need to ascertain how the journal likes it laid out and how they would like your article to be submitted. Each journal has its own style and requirements. These will be clearly laid out in the information given to prospective authors. Read these instructions carefully and adhere to them to maximise your chances of acceptance for publication. Copies of these instructions will either be published in the journal, available from their Web site or available by requesting a copy from their editorial office. Reputable journals reject at least 33% of submitted work. The more reputable the journal the more prestige you will get from the publication.

Many editors will be happy to give editorial approval in principal for an article, before you start. You will need to send them an outline of your proposed article. This does not mean that they will publish but they could be interested.

The finished article should be typed in double spacing on single sided A4 paper. Most journals prefer spelling to conform to Chambers 21st Century Dictionary. Check your chosen journal's
preferred punctuation, formatting and general layout. Diagrams, bar charts or tables should each be on a separate sheet and some journals stipulate a limit for these. Photographs and other illustrations should be as clear as possible; some clarity will be lost in reproduction. References should be set out in the journal’s preferred style, although some journals will do this for you if you provide all the relevant information. Follow the requirements as laid out by the journal. Make sure that you include everything that is asked for.

When writing articles reporting research findings the following should be included
A Title or cover page
Acknowledgements
An Abstract
Introduction / statement of the problem
Research Methods
Findings / Results
Discussion / Conclusion
References
Appendices

Some journals ask for key words that can be used in literature searching.

When you have finished writing your article make sure that you ask at least two of your colleagues and someone who is reliable and competent grammatically to read the article through. Ask them to be completely honest and if anything over critical. If you are unsure of anything you can always telephone the editorial office for advice or clarification.
Journals will state how they want them submitted but it is usually a copy on a 3.5inch floppy disk in ASCII text or word charts etc usually in PowerPoint with pictures as a jpeg file. They will also require and a hard copy. Don't forget to keep a copy for your self both on your computer hard disc and a paper copy.

Once you have submitted your article it will go through a process of review. This can take several weeks or months. If your article is accepted it will probably be sent back to you for some amendments prior to publication. A journal will expect the work to be original and to be given exclusive submission and often ask for a statement to this effect (this means you are only allowed to submit to one journal at a time and only on rejection can you submit to another) they will also hold the copyright and you will need their permission to publish the same article elsewhere. For the sake of your professional reputation or if you are unsure seek advice from the editor of the journal involved, colleagues, or the R & D Office before you proceed.
Assuming you are in agreement and still want to publish with that journal, return the revised copy within the time limit stipulated. If you disagree with the editor or reviewers and you feel you have a valid point to make, or feel a decision is incorrect, speak to the editor and you may be able to reach a compromise. An article can still be rejected at this stage.
Hopefully the whole experience will be positive and you can progress to your next publication with greater confidence. Having published one successful article the second one will be easier, firstly you will be an experienced author, secondly publishers like to publish work from authors who have already had articles published, especially if you have had an article published in a prestigious journal – if you get published in Nature you can retire on the money you will make from future publications.

KEY POINTS

Choose you journal carefully to make sure that it will reach your chosen audience
Check the format and style of typical articles in your journal/s of choice
Get editorial approval in principal for what you want to write, before you start
If possible accept the advice of specialist reviewers
Follow the publisher’s guide to authors
Get at least two colleagues, whose opinions you respect, to critically review your article. The presentation of your findings should always be concise and to the point. Rejection does not mean that your article is no good.

**OTHER METHODS OF PRESENTING YOUR FINDINGS**

**Conferences**

- Conferences provide researchers with the opportunity to give presentations as well as create poster displays to publicise their research findings.
- Presentations can also be given in other forums such as lectures, workshops, symposia, etc.
- Giving a presentation requires a great deal of preparation and practice.
- Firstly, there is your audience to consider: you must ensure that your presentation will be appropriate for them.
- Secondly, plan what you are going to say and how you are going to illustrate your points (e.g. visual aids). Check what visual aids are offered by the venue for your presentation.
- Finally, rehearse your presentation in front of colleagues who are familiar with your subject and can give constructive comments. Remember to include any visual aids, which you may be using, in your rehearsal.
- Poster displays should be well-designed and visually attractive. This may mean that you will not be able to include too much detail.
- The conference organisers should give you guidelines about your display.
- At the conference, it would be a good idea to be available by your display at certain times to answer any questions about your research.

**Theses**

- A thesis is the appropriate form for presenting findings from academic research.
- Your University’s post-graduate department should give guidelines for the format of theses.

**FURTHER READING**

Guidelines for contributors to Social Science and Medicine 50 (2000) 3-15
The Lancet Guidelines for electronic submission of Manuscripts and artwork
British Medical Journal on [www.bmj.com/advice/](http://www.bmj.com/advice/)
Health Service Journal Writing for HSJ in all copies of the HSJ.
Community Practitioner – notes for authors

Copies of the above are held in the R&D Office.