

## ▲ A View from the Editor

For the past 21 years, your editor has been submitting articles to this journal under the heading “A View from Washington.” Now that I have assumed the editor’s reins as of July 2008, it seems apropos for the following observations to come under the rubric of “A View from the Editor.”

A belief held by many is that most of the world’s wealth is controlled by a mysterious group known as the Gnomes of Switzerland. In the world of academic publishing, a counterpart to these mythical woodland creatures of metaphorical lore would consist of the editors and reviewers who are involved in deciding which submitted manuscripts should be forwarded to the print shop and which should be rejected.

Rather than view the following comments as a source of chronic fits of annoyance, they are presented for the benefit of readers of this periodical who someday may be in a position to submit one of their own articles for consideration. As a preface, it should be noted that reviewers of the *Journal of Allied Health* are greatly appreciated for the time and effort that they devote to enhancing the quality of this publication.

For authors who submit papers, the following observations may help to understand the editorial process followed by this journal in addition to suggesting how to prepare a more informative manuscript.

### *Who Conducts the Reviews?*

The *Journal* has more than 125 reviewers. They specify their expertise and interests. Upon submission of a paper, an effort is made to select 3 reviewers who appear to have knowledge about the topic under consideration. They are requested to review the manuscript within a 1-month period. Their assessments are sent to authors, usually with

an indication that important revisions will have to be made in order for the article to be accepted for publication. It is not unusual for a paper to go back and forth three or four times between reviewers and authors.

Occasionally, an article never makes it to the review stage. It may be rejected for the simple reason that it has nothing to do with allied health and may be better suited for another periodical. Another reason would be that it repeats what already has appeared in another publication or it is just too weak and deserves no further scrutiny.

### *Title of the Manuscript*

Strange as it may seem, occasionally articles are submitted that contain spelling errors in the title. Oftentimes, it clearly is all downhill from there. A related concern is that the title doesn’t always correspond to the contents of the article. If the word *paralysis* appears in the title, then the paper should have some focus on that condition. The title should contain words that convey to readers concisely what is needed to understand the basic thrust of the paper.

### *Authors*

It is becoming increasingly common for multiple authors to be listed. What contributions did each one make in the areas of planning the study, carrying it out, and analyzing the data? Did every coauthor actually read it? Do they all know that their names are listed?

### *Abstract*

A common flaw is that abstracts are much too long. Approximately 200 words should suffice to convey the gist of the paper. The purpose of the study

needs to be stated clearly, along with related information that describes the methodology, study sample, and results. An egregious mistake is to convey findings that are not supported by the data generated in the study. Subsequently, an abstract may need to be revised to reflect revisions made in the manuscript at the request of peer-reviewers.

### *Writing Quality and the Text*

Some manuscripts are especially painful to read because of grammatical errors and incorrect punctuation. Words that are plural nouns should be followed by plural verbs. The word *data* is a plural noun. The same holds true for the word *media*. It also is worth noting that there really are significant differences between words such as *affect* and *effect* and between the words *lose* and *loose*. Paragraphs should flow smoothly from one to the next. References should be listed in the proper format and in order of citation.

The following items lend themselves to a request that revisions be made as a condition for further consideration of the possibility that a paper will be accepted for publication:

- The overall presentation of information is confusing and illogical.
- Too much is unexplained.
- Much information is extraneous and useless.
- The methodological background lacks important elements, such as whether the study instrument has been tested to show validity and reliability.
- If interviews serve as a basis for collecting data, how were they conducted, by whom, and which disciplines were included in the study?
- The results and conclusions do not match the purpose of the study as stated at the beginning of the article.

- The active voice should be stressed over the passive voice.

### *Reasons for Rejection*

Some articles may be carbon copies of material published elsewhere. It is not an unknown phenomenon to take a study and slice it as if it were a chunk of salami, into thinner and thinner slices. After each piece acquires a modified title and some rearranged language in the body of the text, it is sent to a different journal for publication. If data are part of a previously published study, then an explanation of the relationship between the two needs to be provided in the manuscript. Any other published items that bear a kinship to the submitted paper need to be cited.

Failure to take these steps is grounds for rejection. Authors need to state whether any portion has been

published elsewhere or currently is awaiting a decision about publication in another journal.

Related problems may be that the study sample is too small and the resulting data too insufficient to draw meaningful conclusions. The study design also may be flawed. Even though an investigation may have been conducted in a correct way, little of additional value is added to the existing body of knowledge.

### *What to Do When Revisions Are Requested or the Paper Is Rejected*

Pride of authorship is associated with courage and the stamina needed to convey one's thoughts in writing to an outside audience that is anonymous in nature. Depending on one's mood, it can be irritating to learn that another individual found fault with a product

that the author views as being of masterpiece caliber.

The good news is that interest was shown on the part of reviewers to suggest that revisions be made. If that assessment is accepted in the correct spirit, then it is worth the effort to do some rewriting. When the next iteration is sent, it helps greatly if the author highlights all the changes that were incorporated and enumerates them in a cover letter.

If an article is rejected, it never hurts to submit an appeal. Editors and reviewers are not infallible. If a strong enough case is made upon appeal, then it is possible for additional consideration to occur.

THOMAS W. ELWOOD, DRPH  
*Editor-in-Chief*  
Washington, DC  
[thomas@asahp.org](mailto:thomas@asahp.org)