



Tomorrow's Doctors, Tomorrow's Cures

Learn

Serve

Lead

Writing Effective Titles and Abstracts

Making Your Scholarship Stand Out

Jennifer Campi, jcampi@aamc.org

Toni Gallo, tgallo@aamc.org



Association of
American Medical Colleges

When developing a paper ...

Think about:

- Aims of the paper and what it contributes
- Target audience and the journal mission and venue
- Your professional development and goals – How does this work fit into your life's work?
- Getting in touch with colleagues, editors for guidance

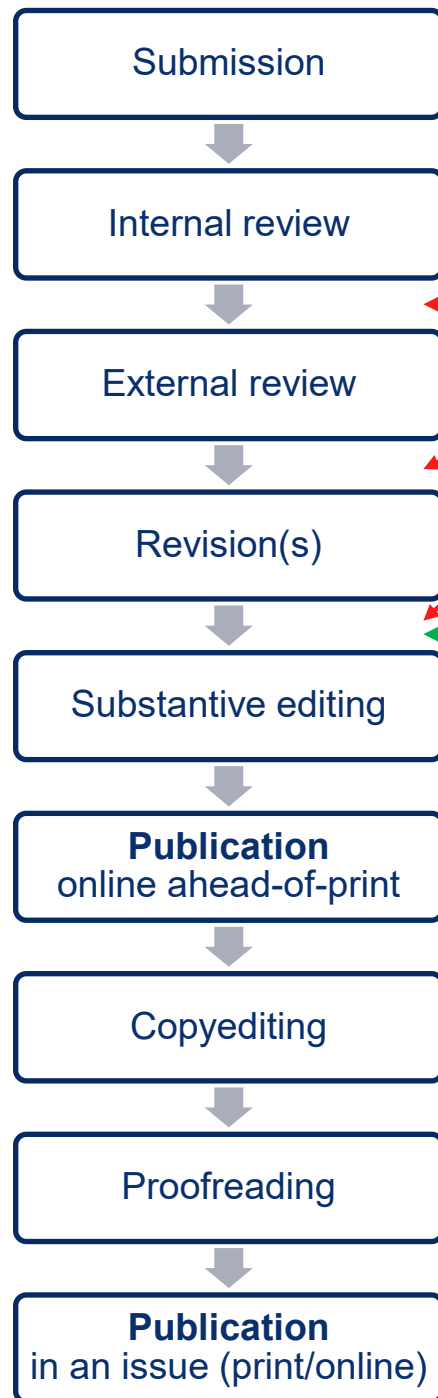
“It’s a *Story*, Not a Study”

- Consider the purpose of your work and your audience before writing your paper
- Different journals have different article types and audiences
 - Read recently published articles to determine how your work could fit
 - Review the instructions for authors to determine any journal-specific requirements

What do editors want?

- Significant, clear rationale
- Novel, interesting idea
- Alignment of purpose with rigorous methodology and data analysis strategy
- Discussion that puts the results or arguments into context
- Likely to be cited
- A good fit for the journal / publication
- Well written — Work is presented clearly and accurately

Review and publication process



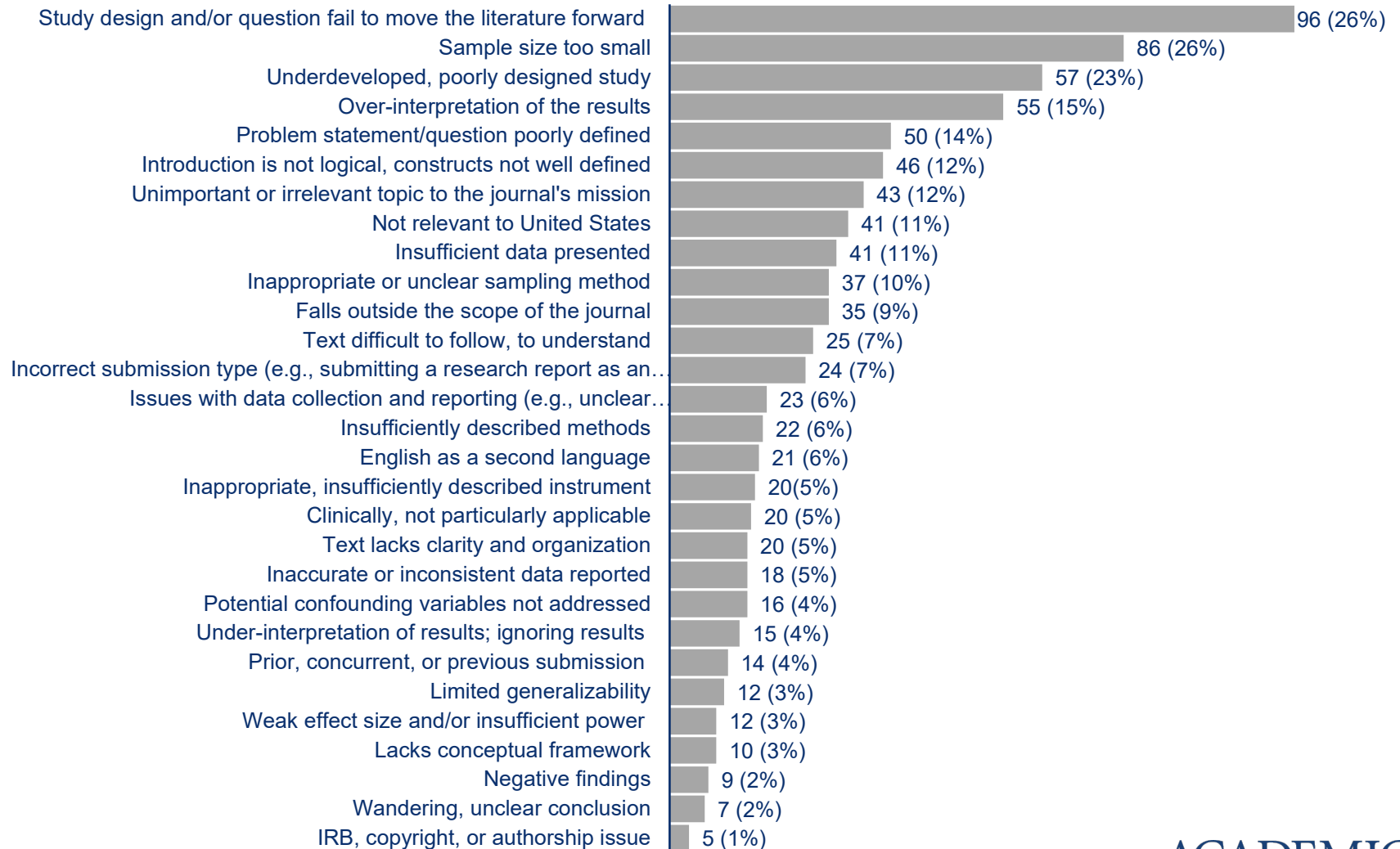
REJECT decision

ACCEPT decision

Professional staff editors work closely with authors to:

- Strengthen arguments
- Improve organization and flow of ideas
- Tighten prose
- Ensure consistency

Reasons for rejection without review at *Academic Medicine*



Meyer HS, Durning SJ, Sklar D, et al. Making the first cut: An analysis of Academic Medicine editors' reasons for not sending manuscripts out for external peer review. *Acad Med.* 2018;93:464-470.

Titles and abstracts are important!

- Many readers scan titles and abstracts to decide whether to:
 - Read an article
 - Use an article as a source
 - Include an article in a literature review
 - Agree to review a manuscript submission
- Search engines (e.g., Google) and databases (e.g., PubMed) use key words in titles and abstracts to pull up search results

Effective titles

- Informative
- Interesting
- Not too wordy
- Represent the article
- Include key search terms
- Limit use of acronyms

Effective titles

- Keep it simple

Teaching Oral Health in U.S. Medical Schools:
Results of a National Survey

Effective titles

- **Keep it simple**

Building Workforce Capacity Abroad While
Strengthening Global Health Programs at Home:
Participation of Seven Harvard-Affiliated
Institutions in a Health Professional Training
Initiative in Rwanda

Effective titles

- **Keep it simple**
 - a. Building Workforce Capacity Abroad While Strengthening Global Health Programs at Home
 - b. Participation of Seven Harvard-Affiliated Institutions in
 - c. a Health Professional Training Initiative in
 - d. Rwanda

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- Include key search terms

It Is Time for Zero Tolerance for Sexual Harassment in Academic Medicine

Leading by Example: Role Modeling Resilience Helps Our Learners and Ourselves

Effective titles

- Include key search terms

It Is Time for **Zero Tolerance** for **Sexual Harassment** in **Academic Medicine**

Leading by Example: **Role Modeling Resilience** Helps Our **Learners** and **Ourselves**

Effective titles

- Represent the article's content

It's Time to Be More Explicit About the Purpose of Hospital Admission

Explicit Dialogue About the Purpose of Hospital Admission Is Essential: How Different Perspectives Affect Teamwork, Trust, and Patient Care

Effective titles

- **Represent the article's content**
 - a. It's Time to Be More Explicit About the Purpose of Hospital Admission
 - b. Explicit Dialogue About the Purpose of Hospital Admission Is Essential: How Different Perspectives Affect Teamwork, Trust, and Patient Care
 - c. I would rewrite both versions.

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Effective titles

- Represent the article's content

Does Prior Community College Attendance Predict Diversity in Health Professions Schools? The Case of Physician Assistants

Does Community College Attendance Affect Matriculation to a Physician Assistant Program? A Pathway to Increase Diversity in the Health Professions

Effective titles

- **Limit acronyms; generally define terms and topics**

Leading by Design: Lessons for the Future
From 25 Years of the Executive Leadership in
Academic Medicine (ELAM) Program for Women

Effective titles

- **Limit acronyms; generally define terms and topics**

Study Behaviors and USMLE Step 1 Performance:
Implications of a Student Self-Directed Parallel
Curriculum

- a. Use the USMLE acronym only
- b. Spell out United States Medical Licensing Examination
- c. Use the USMLE acronym AND spell it out

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Effective titles

- Use subtitles to provide clarity

Medical School Without Walls: 50 Years of Regional Campuses at Indiana University School of Medicine

“Rising to the Level of Your Incompetence”: What Physicians’ Self-Assessment of Their Performance Reveals About the Imposter Syndrome in Medicine

Effective titles

- **Capture the reader's attention, but use a scholarly tone**

“Don't Kill Granny”: A Consensus on Geriatric Competencies for Graduating Medical Students

- a. I love it! It's eye catching and I can't wait to read this paper.
- b. Oh dear! Definitely not the scholarly tone needed for a journal article.

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- **Capture the reader's attention, but use a scholarly tone**

Keeping Granny Safe on July 1: A Consensus on Minimum Geriatrics Competencies for Graduating Medical Students

Effective titles

- **Sometimes break the rules!**

Fake It 'Til You Make It: Pressures to Measure Up in Surgical Training

- a. I'd read this paper. Keep the title!
- b. Tell me more. Tell me more. The title lacks specificity.

Effective titles

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Is There Hardening of the Heart During Medical School?

What makes a good abstract?

- Gives the reader an accurate, comprehensive summary of the article's content but not in too much detail
 - Includes year of study or implementation
 - Includes number and type of participants and institutions
 - States findings accurately
- Avoids providing too much background at the expense of omitting key information

When writing an abstract ...

- Remember it's not an introduction
- Match the abstract to the main text (data, details, ideas)
- Include key information in the abstract AND the main text
- Feel free to borrow language (phrases, sentences) from the main text
- Make sure someone who sees only the abstract will have a good understanding of the article's main messages / findings

Example

Abstract

Purpose

There continues to be a disparity in the representation of women across medicine, including in editor positions at major medical journals. The authors repeated a study they had conducted in 2011 to compare the representation of women in editor-in-chief and editorial board member positions in 2011 and 2021.

Method

The authors included in their analysis the 60 journals from their original 2011 study and the top 5 ranked journals by Journal Impact Factor in each of 12 disciplines in 2021. This led to the inclusion of 86 journals. The authors collected the names and genders of the editors-in-chief and

editorial board members at these journals, using information provided by the journals and a Google search for the photos and/or pronouns of the remaining editors. They compared results across years (2021 vs 2011), editor positions, disciplines, Journal Impact Factors, and ranks.

Results

Twenty-two of the 90 editors-in-chief (24.4%) were women in 2021 compared with 10 of 63 (15.9%) in 2011, an increase of 8.5%. Of the 6,285 editorial board members, 1,756 were women (27.9%) in 2021 compared with 719 of 4,112 (17.5%) in 2011, an increase of 10.4%. Journals with women editors-in-chief gained 3.5 ranks and 9.1 points

in Journal Impact Factor on average over this 10-year period, compared with no gain in rank and an increase of 4.7 points in Journal Impact Factor for journals with men editors-in-chief; both are statistically significant differences ($P = .045$ and $P = .016$, respectively).

Conclusions

In almost all evaluated disciplines and editor positions, there was an increase in the percentage of women at top-ranked medical journals over a 10-year period. Despite this increase, improvements are still needed to accelerate the currently slow rate of change in these positions to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion for women in medicine.

Starchl C, Shah V, Zollner-Schwetz I, et al. A comparison of the representation of women in editor positions at major medical journals in 2021 vs 2011. *Acad Med.* 2023;98:75-79.

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Does the abstract do its job and indicate to you if you want to read this paper?

- a. Yes
- b. No

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Scholarly Publishing Webinar Series

- Using Inclusive Language in Scholarly Writing: A Roundtable Discussion, **July 13**
- Responding to Peer Review: Insights for Successfully Revising Your Manuscript, **Sept 29**
- Office Hours with the Editors of *Academic Medicine* and *MedEdPORTAL*, **Oct 27**

Register at <https://aamc.elevate.commpartners.com/>

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