

Publishing as an Amateur Author, Probability of the ‘Improbable’

Munasinghe BM

Speciality Registrar in Anaesthetics and ITU, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, Ramsgate Rd, Margate CT9 4BQ, UK

To the editor,

The journey of any manuscript has humble beginnings. Despite how esteemed its master is, every manuscript will be screened, reviewed, and revised to finally be deemed worthy of publication. Getting published as a junior author might seem a daunting task. But in reality, perseverance, and proper guidance make it possible to get published and continue writing independently.

As an early-career researcher, author, and reviewer, the following tips gleaned from professional experience might be useful to any prospective writer.

1. The simplest yet the most difficult hurdle is to initiate writing, may it be a simple account of a mundane experience or routine clinical work. Read it after completion. See whether the intended message is conveyed. Revise it. Re-read it. Repeat this until you are completely satisfied. This practice makes you better focused, more attentive to detail, and helps to perfect your writing.
2. Patterns of thinking, interpretation, and response are uniquely heterogeneous. So is writing. Each author has a different style of writing. The intention is to write coherently

without making the reader bored. Each author does ultimately find their own style. What you need are self-belief and persistence.

3. Be original. Try not to reproduce others’ work if possible. This does not necessarily dismiss retesting existing hypotheses or research; however, in general, editors and reviewers are particular about novelty. Original work stands a better chance of acceptance for publication.
4. Always seek guidance and feedback, may it be from a contemporary author or a senior researcher. Writing has a learning curve. Concepts, the flow and presentation of ideas, and language all contribute to a manuscript’s success. Thus, revising before submission, how painstaking it seems, increases the probability of acceptance.
5. Almost all authors have had their manuscripts rejected. It is demoralizing, though it is the reality. Accept failures and rejections, may those be desk rejections or after lengthy revisions. Revisions are essential in improving the quality of a manuscript. If rejected, submit elsewhere. Be prepared to further revise if requested.
6. Welcome opportunities to review. Reviewing is a part of learning as an author. Make sure that the journals are of sufficient quality. Deny reviewing for ‘Predatory journals’. Often, manuscripts submitted to such journals are of poor quality and may not even be related to your expertise. You will not grow as a reviewer and ultimately as an author.
7. Adhere to journal guidance on the scope and preparation of manuscripts. Abide by the limitations of author number, word limit,

*Correspondence: Munasinghe BM

Email: b.munasinghe@nhs.ne



<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8373-4752>

Received: 31/12/2022

Accepted: 28/03/2023

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.4038/slja.v31i1.9150>



reference limit, and specifics on figures and tables. Failing to do so could lead to rejections or long delays in the review process.

8. Be wary of 'Predatory journals' with the promise of rapid publications for a minimal fee. These journals are easy to identify. The visibility of such journals is subpar to standard journals, making your manuscript infrequently accessed and cited.
9. Get inputs from English experts, use language correction software, and make use of 'synonyms'.

Jot down any new ideas. Read around. Initiate, carry on, and complete the manuscript, submit it, and publish it.

Getting published is a challenge. Nevertheless, like most experiences in life, it imparts to the author the values of patience, perseverance, and accepting failure. What is to be realized is, it is an exercise of presenting an idea that will benefit the reader and contribute to expanding the existing pool of knowledge. This manuscript is a testament to the effort and triumph of a fellow amateur author.