

Why My Manuscript Was Rejected? What Next?

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Abstract

The rejection of manuscripts is quite a common phenomenon, and multiple reasons have been identified, which in combination provides enough evidence to the editorial board / reviewers' to reach to their decision. The rejection letters generally serve two purposes, namely it proves that you have actually written up your work; and at the same time can be a source of good constructive criticism so that manuscripts can be significantly improved prior to submission to another journal. The authors should realize that they have received free suggestions from a qualified reviewer so that quality of the manuscript can be improved before it achieves publishable value. In conclusion, performing research and getting it accepted and published in a quality journal is not a walk in the park. However, in the research arena, manuscript rejection is a fact and thus authors need to be positive, persevere with their ideas, and continue their writing.

Keywords: Manuscript; Rejection; Journal

Introduction

Worldwide, in an attempt to improve the health standards and augment the understanding of human biology, multiple research studies have been conducted in the field of health sciences [1]. However, in order to communicate the research findings to the different corners of the world, the study findings are submitted by the researchers in the form of a manuscript (viz. research articles, brief reports, review articles, commentaries, meta-analysis, expert opinions, medical education, letters to the editor, notes from the field, technical note, editorials, etc.), to a national or international journal for publication [1].

These submitted manuscripts are assessed by the Editor-In-Chief and other editorial members of the journal, and based upon its suitability with the scope of the journal or fulfillment of the journals' guidelines, a decision is made to either reject the manuscript outrightly or sent for peer-review [2,3]. Once the reviewer comments are received, only the outstanding articles / articles with minor flaws are allowed to go to next stage, while rest all are declined by giving appropriate reasons for rejection [1,2]. In-fact, it has been reported that manuscript rejection is quite common (even higher in journals with high impact factor), and almost 62% of published manuscripts have been rejected at least one time [4,5].

Multiple reasons like submitting the manuscript to a wrong journal; non-compliance with the journal instructions to prepare manuscript (viz. abstract not written as desired, citation of references in the text and at the end, etc.); dearth of originality (viz. employment of obsolete methods, results that are unoriginal, predictable, trivial, lacks generalizability, and have no clinical implications); poor rationale for the study; wrong study design; inadequate description of the methods; small or inappropriately chosen sample; inappropriate statistical analysis; sub-optimal reporting of the results; lack of interpretation; inadequate literature review; citation of very old references; poor

writing - improper formatting and language, grammatical lapses, and typographic errors; failure to revise and resubmit following peer review; inadequate corrections of galley proofs; simultaneous submission to another journal; and definitive evidence of plagiarism; have been identified, which in combination provides enough evidence to the editorial board / reviewers' to reach to decision of rejecting the manuscript [1,4,6-9]. In addition, factors like space constraints; quality and experience of peer reviewers; number of issues published per year; decision-making policy of the journal; the journal entertains only theme-based articles for different issues; and receipt of more than one submission on the same topic, further aggravates the problem of rejection [7,10,11].

It has been proposed that manuscripts are either rejected on an outright basis (if there is no new information in the manuscript or a major methodological error); or are correctable (if there is error in manuscript organization or linguistic errors) [2,6]. The rejection letters generally serve two purposes, namely it proves that you have actually written up your work; and at the same time can be a source of good constructive criticism so that manuscripts can be significantly improved prior to submission to another journal [2]. Although, rejection of a manuscript is disappointing, nevertheless, most of them gets published within a reasonable time interval [4]. The authors should realize that they have received free suggestions from a qualified reviewer so that quality of the manuscript can be improved before it achieves publishable value [3]. Furthermore, as already stated above there are many causes for rejection and hence it should not be taken personally [3,9].

In order to prevent the manuscripts from being rejected, some tips have to be followed, namely choose the journal carefully (viz. based on its scope, visibility, & importance of the work done); look for the most recent instructions to authors; follow the instructions thoroughly; subject the manuscript for grammatical & linguistic check; give more attention to methodology & discussion section; cite appropriate & recent references in the desired manner; and ask a colleague to critically assess your paper [1,3,8,9]. In addition, while replying to

referees' comments, ensure that the response is quick, comprehensive, courteous, and evidence-based to increase the chance of acceptance of the manuscript [12,13].

In conclusion, performing research and getting it accepted and published in a quality journal is not a walk in the park. Thus, authors should sincerely attempt to improve the quality of their work. However, in the research arena, manuscript rejection is a fact and thus authors need to be positive, persevere with their ideas, and continue their writing.

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