

Getting Clinical Research Published

(mostly) a writer's perspective

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Writing is storytelling (even scientific writing)

Write for your readers

- Who's the audience? (readers, reviewers)
- Read the literature critically
- Take every chance to be a reviewer

Choosing a journal

- Be realistic re: novelty / importance of the paper
- But don't be afraid to take shots on goal (the worst they can say is no)
- Don't take rejection personally
- Prostate cancer offers many homes (general medicine, oncology, urology, translational science, basic science, health policy, epidemiology)

Figures

- A picture is worth (at least) 100 words — so don't repeat the words
- Figures need to look professional
- Don't make a graph for what can be said in a sentence
- Use the right graph
- Don't rely on Excel to format for you
- KM plots need to include censorship info

Tables

- Should be parsimonious
- Follow journal standards re: rule lines (as much as possible)
- Choose table vs. graph carefully

Results and Methods

- Know your audience (especially in terms of basic vs. clinical science)
- Methods and results should be parallel
- Statistics needs to be solid
- Avoid (or address explicitly) red flags like outdated datasets, non-randomly selected cases

Discussion

- *Briefly* summarize the results and why they are important
- What is new and noteworthy? What was surprising? Why should this paper be published?
- Put findings in context—but don't write a mini-review
- Write limitations from a reviewer's perspective
- How will this change clinical practice / research, and what's the next step?
- Don't feel compelled to fill the word count

Introduction

- Be brief (1 page / 2-3 paragraphs maximum)
- Provide just enough context for your reader
- What is known, what is the knowledge gap that this paper seeks to fill, and why should we care?
- Do not include a full discussion / literature review
- Finish with a clear hypothesis statement

To state the obvious...

- Proofread
- Make sure all authors are on the same page
- If English is not your first language, ask for help or hire a proofreader
- Follow the journal style sheet
- *Always* keep the reviewers in mind
- Take revision seriously

- Have fun!