

医学英語論文をまとめるための一歩進んだ執筆方法

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Advanced Techniques for Writing Medical Papers

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Abstract

In November 2003, the Uniform Requirements for the Submission of Manuscripts to Biomedical Journals were revised. The Uniform Requirements are presently recognized by almost 600 biomedical journals worldwide, and can be said to be the Bible of medical paper writing. This presentation describes the changes made in the 2003 edition in comparison to the previous edition. The main emphasis of the new edition is that it instructs authors to pay close attention to the Instruction to Authors of the target journal. While following the basic format of the Uniform Requirements, authors are exhorted to make sure that the format of their paper fits the target journal with regard to the style and format of abstracts, etc.

The second part of the presentation deals with techniques to have papers accepted by high-impact factor journals, and steps that are needed to be taken in order to do this. In particular, attention is called to the necessity of suggesting the names, addresses and other contact information of three or more possible reviewers.

The last section presents various examples based on the style of the New England Journal of Medicine appropriate for Introduction, Materials and Methods, Result and Discussion sections of papers.

Key words: 2003 Uniform Requirements, Instructions to Authors, Electronic submission, Checklists, Nomination of referees

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Introduction

On consultation with Prof. Akazawa on how to use this opportunity most effectively, I have decided to cover 3 main topics. The first is the changes in the most recent 2003 edition of the Uniform Requirements for the Submission of Manuscripts to Biomedical Journals. The second is how to submit papers to be accepted by top journals including the technique of nominating possible reviewers. The third is introducing elegant expressions in the style of the New England Journal of Medicine that can be useful in the Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results and Discussion sections of papers.

Section 1

Changes and Additions to the Uniform Requirements for the Submission of Manuscripts to Biomedical Journals

The Revised Uniform Requirements

While the basic approach of the Uniform Requirements has remained approximately the same since its first establishment in 1978, the revised version in 2003 has many additional comments and represents a developed form of document compared to the previous edition.

Instructions to Authors

One of the main points is that it instructs the readers not only to follow the basic tenets of the Uniform Requirements but also to look carefully at the Instructions to Authors of the journal to which they wish to submit their paper (target journal). This recommendation to heed the advice of the target journal was not present in the present version of the Uniform Requirements. It also suggests referring to the reporting guidelines and to using CONSORT (www.consort-statement.org) for guidelines of randomized controlled trials.

Abstracts

Concerning abstracts, it calls the readers' attention to the fact that some journals have different formats, structured or unstructured, and that the structure of the journal should be adhered to. In addition, some journals require more than one abstract, such as a mini-abstract plus a main abstract, and again, the instructions to authors and the customs of the target journal should be followed.

Keywords

With regard to keywords, although the Uniform Requirements suggest 3 to 10 words, I propose that, in keeping with the ideas proposed in other sections by the Uniform Requirements, the paper should have the exact number of keywords as used in the target journal.

Materials and Methods

In the Materials and Methods, they state that only what is known at the time of the planning of the study should be used in the Materials and Methods, and anything that is found out during the application of these methods during the study should be placed in the Results. The Materials and Methods should also make clear the criteria for eligibility, exclusion criteria, and the source population.

Statistics

Concerning the statistics, the Uniform Requirements request that the range of the statistical applicability of the study should be clearly specified and that all statistical terms, abbreviations and symbols should be clearly defined.

Results

In the Results, the author is encouraged to use not only percentages, but also to give absolute numbers. This is another point that was not rec-

ommended before in the previous version of the Uniform Requirements.

Discussion

Regarding the discussion, as in the previous edition, the new Uniform Requirements emphasize the necessity to state what is new and what will become important in the application in the findings of the paper. They also state to be careful to define the limitations of the study.

References

Concerning the references, they strongly advocate avoiding the use of secondary or tertiary references, instead using the minimum number of primary references. They encourage material that is already accepted for publication to be referenced as “in press” or as “forthcoming”. Furthermore, they suggest avoiding, whenever possible, personal communications. Moreover, if personal communications are absolutely necessary, a written statement supporting the statement must be obtained from the person who is designated as the originator of the comment.

Units of Measurements

Concerning the units of measurement, the author should consult whether the target journal uses International Standard of Units or not, and they advocate that not commonly used abbreviations should be avoided. Abbreviations should not be included in the title.

Submission

With regard to the submission of data, they point out that, primarily in order to save money, increasing numbers of journals are moving towards electronic submission, and the author should be fully aware of the problems caused by this and how to overcome them.

Cover Letter

They also mention the importance of the cover letter, describing the content of the paper and bringing up the question of any possible overlap or anything that might be construed as duplicate publication, suggesting if there is any article that might possibly be considered duplicate publication, that article should be included with the submission of the newly submitted article.

Section 2

Submission to Top Journals

Basic Strategy to Get Accepted by Top Journals

Basic strategy to get accepted by top journals includes the following: 1. have an international medical communications center established in your institution, 2. memorize the Uniform Requirements, 3. create your own checklist, 4. check the suitability of journal for your paper, 5. read the journal and learn the way it is written and kind of phrases it likes (buzzwords), 6. confirm the artwork, 7. obtain comments from a higher impact journal in order to improve the level of your paper, 8. consider cosmesis, 9. appeal, 10. suggest possible referees, 11. respond to referee's comments in detail.

Checklist for Submission

The checklists are extremely important. You can take a checklist from any widely-read journal and add to it as you see fit for your personal needs. Make sure that the papers in previous issues of your target journal are similar in terms of the scope and readership appeal to your paper. Furthermore, if necessary, rewrite articles in your target journal to make sure that you have mastered the style of the journal. The overall appearance of your paper, such as the title page, margins, font, number of words per page, etc. are all important. Even more so is your ability to appeal, especially at

the end of introduction and beginning and end of discussion. One way of appealing is to focus on the discussion from the beginning.

Nomination of Referees

Concerning the nomination of possible candidates for referees, most journals, even though they do not say anything about in the instructions to authors, generally welcome suggestion of possible referees. This is because referees are very valuable to a journal and can improve the overall level. If the refereeing for the journal is good, the level of its papers improves. Therefore, journals are interested in being introduced to referees they have not used before, which means people who are in their 30s or 40s and working in the field, and if necessary, you can introduce such a candidate as referee with a copy of one of their papers. When you nominate referees, you should give their affiliation, title, address and contact telephone and fax numbers as well as e-mail address. In addition, it is

extremely important to carefully answer the comments of the reviewers.

Section 3

Elegant Expressions from the New England Journal of Medicine

We present several concrete examples, based on the style of the New England Journal of Medicine, as examples of elegantly expressing ideas in the Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results and Discussion sections of papers. We hope that some of these may be of use to the audience and readers in establishing their career and publishing papers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude for being able to make this presentation and express the hope that there will soon be an International Medical Communications Center in Niigata University.
