

Requirements for manuscript submission: what every author needs to know and comply with to facilitate the review process

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You have just finished writing a scientifically sound manuscript on an important subject and you are impatient to submit it right away. Hold on a second! Are you really aware of the journal's standards and uniform requirements for submission? There are certain requirements that authors need to comply with but commonly overlook when submitting their study. Some of these requirements are journal-specific and stated in its "Instructions to Authors" and some are universally accepted standards recommended by international authorities such as the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). In this editorial, I will try to summarize the prerequisites for manuscript submission.

Journal standards and technical check

Each manuscript submitted to *Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology* is carefully scrutinized to ensure that the journal's standards and requirements are met (<http://www.dirjournal.org/materyal/buyuk/ITAsan.pdf>). *Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology* receives over five hundred submissions each year, yet only a small minority of submissions meets its guidelines. Commonly overlooked points during submission are inappropriately formatted abstracts, references, tables, and figures, absent or deficient citation to corresponding references, tables, and figures, exceeding the journal's word and figure limits for each manuscript type, improper use of abbreviations in the text, and failure to submit a cover letter and the copyright transfer form. In June 2005 issue of *Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology*, several key points for the standards of figures, tables, and references were summarized, and I urge readers to go over it once more (1). Manuscripts that are not compliant with the journal's guidelines are returned to authors to complete the requirements instead of going through the review process. Even more cumbersome is that some manuscripts go back and forth between the corresponding author and our editorial office staff several times which inevitably and unnecessarily delays the initiation of the peer review process. Our data show that on average each manuscript needs to be resubmitted once at the stage of initial check due to poor compliance with the journal's requirements. Failure to adhere guidelines is more prevalent in manuscripts submitted from Middle East, Africa, China, and India.

The lost time in this stage becomes more striking considering our current submission-to-first decision period of 28 days on average (2). Therefore, authors need to make every effort to ensure that their manuscript is in full compliance with the journal's instructions before submitting. The authors are also advised to consult most recent issues of the journal with respect to paper formats and specific journal standards.

Universally accepted requirements for manuscript submission

As is the case with many biomedical publications, *Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology* follows the ICMJE guidelines (www.icmje.org) for the conduct, reporting, editing, and publication of scholarly work in medical journals (3). It is in the best interest of any author to pay attention and review these rules before they submit their work to a journal abiding these guidelines. The standards of scientific publication basically cover such issues as scientific integrity, ethics, authorship, conflict of interest disclosure, and copyright transfer.

Scientific integrity

As the Editor in Chief, I am responsible for ensuring scientific accuracy and integrity of the entire content of the journal. Misconduct issues have been increasing in scientific publications (4) and we used to count only on our editors, reviewers, and readers to detect potential misconduct. In an increased effort to maintain scientific integrity and publication ethics, we have been using CrossCheck's plagiarism detection software, iThenticate, to identify duplication since March 2013. Every manuscript submitted to *Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology* is now being screened by this software for potential plagiarism or self-plagiarism. Those with overall similarity index of greater than 20%, or duplication rate at or higher than 5% with a single source are red flagged and turned back to authors without further evaluation along with the similarity report. In most instances we allow authors to resubmit their work provided that they make corrections to decrease the duplication and add proper attribution. However, a manuscript may be rejected without review in case of extreme duplication. Since the software database includes more than thirty million articles from more than 365 publishers, it is very likely that it will detect duplications (www.elsevier.com/editors/perk/plagiarismdetection). Since the software can only detect duplication within the text at present, we still rely on our reviewers, editors, and readers to identify any duplication of figures and tables. Authors should know that they can

avoid potential misconduct investigations by getting permission from the original publisher, using quotation marks, and adding appropriate references to previously published material, even they are from their own research group.

Ethical responsibility

Studies involving human or animal participants must be approved by the appropriate ethics committee. Prospective human studies require both approval and informed consent by participants. Retrospective studies require approval with waiver of informed consent. Authors may be required to document such approval.

Authorship

Authors must have substantial intellectual contribution to the creation of the manuscript and accept public responsibility for it. According to ICMJE guidelines (www.icmje.org) all of the following criteria must be met to be considered an author (3):

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

All individuals who meet these criteria should be authors, and specific contributions of each author must be clearly described in the cover letter. Each author must agree and confirm that the submitted material has not been and will not be submitted to or published in any other journal. The order of authorship should be decided by the agreement of all co-authors, and all authors must approve and justify any change in authorship after initial submission. Guest, gift (honorary), and ghost authorship are unacceptable since they are not in compliance with the definition of authorship. Further-

more, one should also remember that serving as a guest or gift author places the individual at risk for any potential misconduct related to study or any of co-authors (5). Individuals who are involved in the study but do not meet the authorship criteria described in the ICMJE guidelines may be listed in the acknowledgement section along with their role or contribution.

Conflict of interest disclosure

Journals have a responsibility of providing unbiased presentation of data or analysis to their readership and to the public, thus they require all authors to declare conflict of interest that could potentially influence their study. A potential conflicting interest might arise from financial (management, employment, consultancy, honorarium, stock ownership, etc.) or nonfinancial interests or associations (personal, professional, institutional, political, etc.). All authors should explicitly disclose any interest or relationship that a reasonable reader might feel it has an influence on their study (3).

Copyright transfer form

Like most journals, *Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology* uses copyright processes and asks submitting authors to fill and sign the copyright transfer form appropriately and send it during submission. Since it is a prerequisite, it is signed by all authors but I doubt that the content of the form is read and understood when it is signed (6). Copyright transfer form appears at the beginning of each print issue of the *Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology* (i.e., on the A4 page) or can be downloaded from the web site (www.dirjournal.org). It includes six items that all authors must certify when signing the form. These items define the scientific integrity, ethical aspects, conflict of interest disclosure and authorship issues discussed in this editorial. The copyright agreement stipulates that the submitted manuscript is original in content and authorship, it has neither been published previously nor it is under consideration in another journal. By signing the copyright agreement, the authors hand over the copyright of their work to the publisher of the journal. Therefore, repub-

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in the copyright transfer form if they do not meet the aforementioned authorship criteria.

Authors should remember that adhering to universally accepted and journal-specific guidelines, providing detailed information in the cover letter, and stating any disclosure will facilitate the process from submission to final decision; ignoring these requirements will unnecessarily prolong the overall review process. Publishing scientific work entails not only a well-designed and sound study but a high level of integrity and honesty, which is one of the exact same prerequisites for being a scientist.

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