Selection of authors, titles and writing a manuscript abstract

Tolga Akman

ABSTRACT

Title of the study, authors list and abstract are not only the most widely read parts in an article but also determine whether the remaining sections are worth to be read. The first author in an article should be the planner and performer of the research. Researchers who have actively conducted the study and written the manuscript should be sorted in the authors list according to the importance of their individual contribution. However, researchers who do not directly contribute to the study but take part in data collection process should not be included in the ideal authors list. The title should be comprised of a brief statement or one or two short sentences that best reflect the original and gripping aspects of the study. On the other hand, abstract should provide answers to the following questions in advance of reading the full text: Why this study was performed?, What was the procedure?, What was found?, and What were the outcomes? In this manuscript, writing of an abstract was reviewed in addition to author and title selection.

Key words: Author selection; title selection; writing an abstract.

1. Names, and Sorting the Authors

In manuscripts, the problem of selection, and sorting the names of the authors to be placed in the title of the manuscript is solved by the responsible author. Sometimes this issue is solved without any dispute, and sometimes the authors who couldn't get their labor's worth seriously claim for their rights. Nowadays, apart from scientific curiosity and improvement of one's scientific status, the aim of making scientific researches has become a stressful endeavour under the pressure imposed on the academicians which can be coined as "submit a research article accepted for publication, or get lost!". This phenomenon inevitably creates stress on academicians which urges the author claim their name to be placed in the title of the manuscripts.^[1]

1. a. Who should be authors?

In designing a study, first of all a hypothesis is put forth, and plan, and the project of the study are prepared. Then this hypothesis is tested using various methods, and data obtained are analyzed. Lastly, the results acquired are written. As far as possible the optimal approach is to include the names of the researchers who effectively took part in these steps. On the other hand, in some articles, clinical directors who do not directly contribute to the research, but aided in collection of data are written

among the names of the authors. However ideally these academicians should not be placed among writers of the manuscript.

1. b. Sorting the writers' names.

Debates still continue on the sequencing of the authors in the title. Who will be the first name? The author who plans, and conducts the study should be the first name. The most proper approach is to sort the names of the authors in proportion with the contribution they made to the manuscript. This approach awards the contributors who make great efforts in the realization of the study, and also motivates the authors for the conduction of further researches.^[1]

2. What should be the title of the article?

2. a. The most frequently read part of the article is its title

During writing process of a manuscript, title is generally written at a very early stage namely at the start or after completion of the manuscript in order to express the title with an informative sentence on the topic question. However mostly, the fact that the title of the manuscript is the most frequently read part of is overlooked, and consequently it does not get the importance, and attention it deserves.

Department of Urology, Faculty of Medicine, Bezmialem Vakıf University, İstanbul, Turkey

Submitted:
21.04.2013

Accepted:
20.05.2013

Correspondence:
Tolga Akman
Department of Urology, Faculty of Medicine, Bezmialem Vakıf University, 34396 İstanbul, Turkey
Phone: +90 212 414 20 00-31822
E-mail: takman36@mynet.com

©Copyright 2013 by Turkish Association of Urology

Available online at
www.turkishjournalofurology.com

In a mass media where millions of manuscripts are written, and cited in the literature, the reader first of all glances at the title to find the article mostly suits to his/her interests, and at this decisive moment, decides to “go or stop.” The reader directs its attention naturally from a title which does not give a meaningful message to more attractive titles. Besides, no matter how rich, and effective is the content of the article, it is a great misfortune not to reflect its scientific worth on the title. Indeed, the reader is firstly influenced by the title of the manuscript which will determine his/her level of interest in the article.^[2]

2. b. Which issues should deserve special attention?

2. b. 1. The title should describe the contents of the manuscript

The title is the ‘representative’ of the main text. In other words it tells the reader about the main idea of the manuscript in a quickest way. If it attracts the attention of the reader at first glance, then the article catches a chance of reading. Therefore, the title should be attractive, and constructed with summary sentences, and phrases which might reflect its discriminative features without any exaggeration, and dogmatism.^[3] The title of the manuscript should be eligible, and therefore very puzzling, and gnomic sentences should not be used. Indeed these sentences do not arise curiosity, rather they deter the reader from reading the article. Do not forget that an approach of a reader reviewing scientific articles is to satisfy his/her scientific demand which is quite different from behaviours, and requirements of a newspaper or a magazine reader. So in the eyes of a reader the title of an article is the fundamental guide, and the quickest way to satisfy one’s scientific hunger.^[1]

2. b. 2. The length of a manuscript

The objective of scientific articles is to share, and spread the knowledge acquired on a scientific platform, and attain perfection by taking critical reviews, and assessments into consideration. Within this frame, readers give priority to the articles which increase their knowledge about the topics they are interested in, and accordingly they priorly search through titles to attain their goals. The greatest help of the authors to the scientific community is to write the titles of their manuscripts in explicit words which herald the main idea of the text. Though shorter titles are desirable, if a longer one is a must, then the limits may be stretched.^[1]

2. b. 3. To lost in detail/being superficial

In selecting an explanatory title for the manuscript one should not be lost in detail or remain superficial. Titles prolonged by indulging in much detail will create difficulties in reading, and understanding. Besides, these titles will effect readability unfavourably in that they carry the risk of making potential errors, and distraction from the general topic of the manuscript. If details emphasize the discriminative features of the manuscript,

then they should be indicated briefly in the title. Its use apart from this justification, may mislead the reader. In other words, if our details take an important place in the objectives, and outcomes of our manuscript, they should be absolutely mentioned in the title, otherwise they should have no place in the title.^[4]

Generalized titles have an advantage of expressing the subject matter in brief, but they can remain superficial, and carry a risk of being a cluster of meaningless words for the reader. Of course, title should be as short as possible, and express in the best way what we intended to convey to the reader. However exaggeratedly simple title which does not encompass the most valuable information, and findings of the manuscript for the sake of achieving brevity, will decrease the value of the manuscript in the eyes of the readers.

2. b. 4. Sorting the words

Since nowadays, English is the dominant language in the medical literature, frequently we are compelled to write our manuscripts in other than our mother tongue. This condition may cause errors in syntax, and contents of the manuscript. Errors in titles usually confront us as erroneous alignment of the words in the title. Do you read a manuscript with a title full of mistakes? Naturally, these types of manuscripts receive criticism, and they are rejected by the editorial board of the journal even during manuscript drafting process. A smartly written attractive title contribute to the readability of the manuscript. Therefore, meaning unity, and language esthetics are *sine qua non* conditions for the title.^[1]

2. b. 5. Abbreviations

As far as possible inclusion of abbreviations in the title should be avoided. Occasionally, the abbreviations we adapt, may have diverse meanings in other clinics, and countries or our abbreviations may have no meaning for other people. Therefore, it will be more beneficial to use abbreviations in the text after their first explanation as for their intelligibility.

3. Writing a Summary

When the reader finds the title of the manuscript attractive, and plans to read it, summary is the next section he/she will encounter. In this section, in essence, the reader reads the outlines of the manuscript. If the reader thinks that the summary is adequately formulated, he/she then passes to the main text to get informed about the details. In the summary, every important issue related to the manuscript should be emphasized in order of their increasing significance in that the reader can decide his/her clear-cut decision about the manuscript.^[1]

If possible, we should write the summary after completion of the main text. As can be understood from its name, summary is the section which best describes the main text. If the summary is

written before completion of the main text, it will hardly express the concept of the manuscript in the strictest sense. Therefore, the adequacy of the summary by itself is very important for the timing of the manuscript writing.

Generally summary is restricted to at most 250 words, however this required word count may change according to the requirement of the journal to be selected for manuscript submission.

It is very important to use clear-cut expressions, avoidance of unnecessary details, and use of significant key words when expressing opinions of the authors. Crowds of words in the summary with concealed meanings do not contribute favourably to the reader, and also it can be a reason for rejection of the manuscript.^[4]

Scope of the research, and its main objectives should be stated, methodologies used should be defined, its main outcomes should be provided, results should be summarized, main conclusions should be expressed, and it should be written in past tense. In the summary the following questions should be answered: Why was this research performed? How was it performed? What were the outcomes? Which conclusions can be arrived at in consideration of these outcomes?

The above-enumerated questions describe general headings of the summary, and in essence, the main text. We should pro-

vide answers for “Why was this research performed?”, “How was it performed? What were the outcomes? Which conclusions can be drawn in consideration of these outcomes ? in the ‘Introduction and Objectives’, ‘Methods, and Material’, ‘Results’, and ‘Conclusion’ sections, respectively.

As one the most frequently encountered erroneous applications, data related to the outcomes not indicated in the main text, are included in the summary section. If the said outcome has a critical importance, then its exclusion from the main text is a a major deficiency of the article. Contrarily, if this information is worthless to indicate in the main text, then its inclusion in the summary section will be an unnecessary attempt. Besides, citing references, and placing figure(s), and table(s) in the summary section are among other faulty applications.^[1]

References

1. A. M. Celal Şengör, How to write a scientific paper? İTÜ Avrasya Yerbilimleri Enstitüsü, 2006.
2. Day RA. How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper? Tübitak Yayınları, 1996.
3. Warren S. Browner. Publishing and Presenting Clinical Research Translation Editors: Özmen S, Özmen E. 2013;139-44.
4. Çelik İ. How to write a scientific article? Hacettepe Üniversitesi Onkoloji Enstitüsü, İKU Dergisi, 2007.