The Art and Science of Pathology
Publication: Lessons Learned from Fifteen Years in the Editorial Office

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Elements of Success

An interesting and important research issue
Good study design
Positive results that are novel
Good writing and illustrations

Inspiring confidence in the reviewers and editors
The Step-wise Process

Manuscript Preparation
Submission to the Editorial Office
Recruitment of Reviewers
Review
Initial Decision
Revision
Final Decision
Manuscript Preparation

Select the Target Journal
Read the Instructions for Authors
Write and Illustrate Following the Instructions
Select the Target Journal

Consider:

- Is the paper within the journal’s scope?
- Is the audience what you desire?
- How are illustrations treated?
- Is your paper likely to be accepted?
- Is impact factor important to you?
Instructions for Authors

These are requirements not “suggestions”

Failure to follow them indicates a lack of attention to detail which worries reviewers and editors.

A manuscript submitted in a different format appears to have been rejected by another journal.
Inspiring Confidence is Paramount

Abstract:
Succinctly present the findings and why they are interesting
Inspiring Confidence is Paramount

Introduction:
Set the stage by explaining why the study was done, but without rehashing what everyone knows.
Critically review present knowledge to show you know the field.
Briefly state your plan for the study.
Inspiring Confidence is Paramount

Materials and Methods

The study plan must make sense
Divide into sections according to processes
Detail must be sufficient that a reader could replicate the study
Statistical methods must be appropriate
Study population must be sufficient
Controls must be appropriate
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Results

Present the data in a form that permits the reader to check your arithmetic and answer questions that come to mind that you have not asked

Tables are very useful
Inspiring Confidence is Paramount

Discussion

Judiciously interpret your findings in the context of previous knowledge

Show that you understand the results of the statistical analysis

Honestly assess potential sources of bias and other weaknesses

Honestly estimate the implications of your findings
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Reference List

Omitting relevant papers is a problem
Citing irrelevant papers published by the authors is a problem
Not proof-reading the reference list is a problem
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Illustrations

- Prove your diagnoses are correct
- Show what you interpreted as positive and sometimes negative
- Quality must be excellent
- Composites can cause problems
Common Misconceptions

The manuscript as originally submitted is a sort of rough draft.
Common Misconceptions

The editorial office or publisher can repair problems with English language usage.
The Review Process

Who are the reviewers?

Busy experts who also are volunteers

People who share interests with the authors
The Review Process

What is the structure of their report to the editor?

Comments to the Authors
Private Comments to the Editor
Modern Pathology Review Questions
Modern Pathology Review Process

Questions

What is Your Overall Recommendation?
What is Your Estimate of Priority for the Paper?
Are the Study and Results Novel?
Are the conclusions Supported by the Work?
Will the Paper be Highly Cited?
Does the Quality of English Cause Problems?
The Review Process

Review is inherently a subjective process

Almost all reviewers start out wanting to feel positive about the paper in hand

Avoid irritating the reviewers
The reviewers have a mission to help improve manuscripts which will not be accepted by the journal.
Common Misconceptions

The reviewers are brutally frank in their comments to the authors.
Common Misconceptions

The default setting is that the paper is acceptable.
Initial Decision

Page Budget

Time From Acceptance to Publication
Initial Decision

How does the editor differ from the reviewers?

For Modern Pathology this is the editor’s moment to try to identify the top 20% - 25% of all submissions.
Initial Decision

What does the editor want?

Reader happiness

To attract more outstanding papers

To keep his job
Revision

Do what the reviewers ask or have a good explanation for why it is impossible, unreasonable or not needed.
Revision

“Suggestions” for revision from the editor are really commands.
Final Decision

Usually an anticlimax, but not always
Final Decision

Leading Causes for Rejection:

Declining to revise to meet reviewers requests

Claiming to have revised when the revision has not been done as claimed