

## Writer's Rejection- Dejection

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It has never been a better time for writing and publishing a scientific work. When I began my writing career it was a very time-consuming proposition. Firstly it was essential to have access to a medical library. Photocopying was not available necessitating physical presence in the library searching articles, reading and taking notes. When the paper was finally ready for submission, it was sent to a journal which forwarded it to authority-reviewers. The editorial board made their decision and sent the work back to you with their recommendations. All was accomplished via snail mail and usually required a six months. Revision often required another three months before resubmission the paper was sent back to the original reviewers for re-evaluation and returned to the editors. Final corrections and acceptance were delivered to the author. Six months later galley proofs arrived with expected time for publication which was another three-six months. Time from submission to publication was customarily two years. It was best for your sanity to move to another project.

Presently your computer is your library the majority of your literature research can be done online in your home as well as submitting the paper electronically to the publisher. A response is frequently generated within two weeks. If minimal changes are required your paper can be published electronically within a month. Submission-publication time has been reduced by 1 - 2 years. The immediacy of publication is approaching newspaper journalism which I always found appealing. Of course my journalist friends also me that the same immediacy was their death knell.

If you desire to publish a paper, you need to decide who and what you are writing for. It's been said that writers not only want to write but rather are compelled to write so it may be that you are writing for yourself. You could also write for advancement of the orthopedic literature or some sort of fame but probably not fortune. Realize that the "presenter" of a study or the "author" of the paper learns more than their audience. Your stature as an orthopedist and knowledge will increase. It may not be the easiest method to learn but it is the most enduring.

Next you must read, read and read more journals. You will never be a good writer if you are not a student of the literature. For your first paper do something small such as a case report or a small series. This allows self-reflection of your capability and determination to be a writer. Equally important if your paper is rejected your exasperation for lost time and energy will be minimized.

Subsequently you must decide what part of your life you will sacrifice. Time is your most valuable commodity and always in short supply. Therefore, you must forego something you are presently doing as well as design a schedule for reading and writing. My original schedule was to write on Saturdays, have my secretary type the manuscript during the first of the week while I spent the week doing literature reviews. When the week end arrived, I was ready to rework the paper. Now because of experience and the computer I write nearly every day to include multiple articles. If you have a friend who publishes papers request an evaluation and suggestions for improvement of the paper.

Learning is always fun especially when there is no test while character development begins when the paper is returned from the editor. There is a good chance your first paper will be rejected or require more research and rewriting. The first thing to realize is that you are not alone; this has happened to almost every author on the planet. Take a deep breath, abandon the paper for a few days and then reread

the comments. Probably the reviewers have made valuable comments including strategies to improve it. If you can accept this, you are on your way to becoming a successful scientific writer.

Rejections are not personal. There are multiple reasons for rejections. The paper may simply be unworthy of publication. Ignore it for a couple of months and re-evaluate it. Strangely you may actually agree with them. If you disagree, do not revise it and resend with some argumentative missive. That is inappropriate and a waste of your time. One of the reasons for rejection is that the journal could have published a similar article recently. The article might not have been appropriate for that journal. If this is the instance you could rework the article and resubmit to a different journal. Other reasons for rejection are: not appealing to the orthopedic community at large, not new information, not fresh information of an older subject matter or poor writing skills that the editor knows he cannot improve.

The best way to handle rejection is to already be working on another project. By the time I was ready to submit a paper I had already lost interest in it and was ready to move to a new project. The majority of new information and learning was accomplished while finishing the paper was mostly "work".

Improving your patient's circumstance is fulfilling. Performing an operation well is gratifying. If a songwriter longs to hear his song on the radio, a scientific writer aspires to see his composition in a journal. My greatest satisfaction was the publication of a project I encourage you to share in that satisfaction.

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