Australasian Journal on Ageing

Writing and reviewing for scholarly journals: A view from Oceania

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Australasian Journal on Ageing *Editorial Team*
Sunday 23 October 2011
Melbourne, Australia

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Workshop Program

1.45-2.00: Introductions

2.00-3.00: Reviewing for publication

3.00-3.15: Break

3.30-5.30: Writing for publication

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Reviewing

- How to assess a submission
- How to write a review

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Questions an editor asks

- Is this worth peer review?
  - Quick scan of title, abstract, methodology
- If a fatal flaw, immediate rejection
  - What would count as a fatal flaw?
    - A treatment question answered by a small non-randomised study (too high a risk of bias)
    - A review paper with no systematic search described
- Mismatch between journal and manuscript
  - Consider instructions for authors, previous issues and whether your manuscript is similar in content, methodology and importance

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Author Guidelines: Scope of journal

- *Australasian Journal on Ageing* is the official English language journal of the Australian Association of Gerontology, Aged and Community Services Australia, Australian Council on the Ageing, and the Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine, and publishes original research articles dealing with any area of gerontology and geriatric medicine

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Author Guidelines: Types of papers: 1

- **Reviews** up to 4000 words (50 refs)
- **Original research papers** up to 3000 words (30 refs).
- **Policy and Practice Updates** up to 3000 words (20 refs), by an expert in the field which aim to update readers in areas of professional practice or policy (must be evidence based)
- **Innovations in Aged Care** articles up to 3000 words (20 refs) which describe and evaluate an innovation (ie, new treatments, community and residential care programs, professional training courses and social policies) . Must be evidence based
- Priority given to **brief reports** up to 1500 words (one table/ figure, 20 refs)

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Author Guidelines: Types of papers: 2

- **Invited Editorials** on policy or practice up to 1500 words (10 refs)
- **Letters to the Editor** up to 400 words (10 refs). May be edited and subject to reply
- **Invited Commentaries** up to 1000 words (5 refs) which provide commentary on accepted manuscripts which have particular relevance to our readership

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Author Guidelines: Editorial process

- Acceptance criteria: quality and originality of research and significance to our readership
- Manuscripts double-blind peer reviewed by two anonymous reviewers and the Editor
- Final decision rests with Editorial Committee
- Manuscripts should be written so are intelligible to a professional reader (not specialist in particular field)
- Write in a clear, concise, direct style
- Manuscript may be edited

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Author Guidelines: Best practice

- CONSORT for RCTs and Cluster RCTs
- STARD for Diagnosis studies
- STROBE for observational studies
- Consider appropriate theoretical framework for qualitative projects

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Author Guidelines: Ethics

- Research must be approved by a suitably constituted Ethics Committee of the institution where the work undertaken
  - http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html
- All investigations with people must include a statement that informed consent was obtained
- Participant anonymity should be preserved
- Photographs should be cropped sufficiently to prevent human participants being recognised
  - unless written permission has been obtained

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Author Guidelines: Manuscript Style

- Vancouver reference style (See: http://www.ICMJE.org/)
- Use Australian spelling (see latest Macquarie Dictionary)
- All measurements SI or SI-derived units
- Abbreviations should be used sparingly
- Trade names: Drugs should be referred to by their generic names

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Author Guidelines: The manuscript

- (i) title page, (ii) abstract and key words, (iii) text, (iv) acknowledgements, (v) references, (vi) appendices, (vii) figure legends, (viii) tables (with title and footnotes) (ix) figures
- Text of original research articles: Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, Acknowledgement, Key Points and References
- Footnotes are not allowed and should be incorporated into text as parenthetical matter

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Author Guidelines: Title page

- As articles are double-blind reviewed, provide authorship details on a title page
- Should contain (i) title of paper, (ii) full names of authors and (iii) addresses of the institutions at which work carried out together with (iv) the full postal and email address, plus facsimile and telephone numbers of corresponding author
- Title should be short, informative and contain the major key words. Do not use abbreviations in the title

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Author Guidelines: Abstract/Key words

- **Research articles and Reviews.** 150 word abstract: Objective(s), Method, Results, Conclusion(s)
- **Policy and Practice updates/Innovations in Aged Care.** 150 words abstract: As above, where relevant
- **Key Points :** 3-4 dot points of essential take-home messages
- **Editorials** and **Commentaries** do not need an abstract.
- **Key Words**. Three to five needed. Must be from MeSH http://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/meshhome.html

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Structured Discussion

Suggested structure for discussion of scientific papers

- Statement of principal findings
- Strengths and weaknesses of the study
- Strengths and weaknesses in relation to other studies, discussing particularly any differences in results
- Meaning of the study: possible mechanisms and implications for clinicians or policymakers
- Unanswered questions and future research

The Case for Structuring the Discussion of Scientific Papers. Docherty and Smith BMJ 1999; 318: 1224-1225

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Manuscript review

EDITORIAL

CHECKLIST OF REVIEW CRITERIA*

Problem Statement, Conceptual Framework, and Research Question
- The introduction builds a logical case and context for the problem statement.
- The problem statement is clear and well articulated.
- The conceptual framework is explicit and justified.
- The research question (research hypothesis where applicable) is clear, concise, and complete.
- The variables being investigated are clearly identified and presented.

Reference to the Literature and Documentation
- The literature review is up-to-date.
- The number of references is appropriate and their selection is judicious.
- The review of the literature is well integrated.
- The references are mainly primary sources.
- The ideas are acknowledged appropriately (scholarly attribution) and accurately.
- The literature is analyzed and critically appraised.

Relevance
- The study is relevant to the mission of the journal or its audience.
- The study addresses important problems or issues; the study is worth doing.
- The study adds to the literature already available on the subject.
- The study has generalizability because of the selection of subjects, setting, and educational intervention or materials.

Research Design
- The research design is defined and clearly described, and is sufficiently detailed to permit the study to replicated.
- The design is appropriate (optimal) for the research question.
- The design has internal validity, potential confounding variables or biases are addressed.
- The design has external validity, including subjects, settings, and conditions.
- The design allows for unexpected outcomes or events to occur.
- The design and conduct of the study are plausible.

Instrumentation, Data Collection, and Quality Control
- The development and content of the instrument are sufficiently described or referenced, and are sufficiently detailed to permit the study to be replicated.
- The measurement of instrument is appropriate given the study's variables; the scoring method is clearly defined.
- The psychometric properties and procedures are clearly presented and appropriate.
- The data set is sufficiently described or referenced.
- Observers or raters were sufficiently trained.
- Data quality control is described and adequate.

Population and Sample
- The population is defined clearly, both for subjects (participants) and stimulus (intervention), and is sufficiently detailed to permit the study to be replicated.
- The sampling procedures are sufficiently described.
- Subject samples are appropriate to the research question.
- Stimulus samples are appropriate to the research questions.
- Selection bias is addressed.

Data Analysis and Statistics
- Data analysis procedures are sufficiently described, and are sufficiently detailed to permit the study to be replicated.
- Data analysis procedures conform to the research design; hypotheses, models, or theory drives the data analyses.
- The assumptions underlying the use of statistics are fulfilled by the data, such as measurement properties of the data and normality of distributions.
- Statistical tests are appropriate (optimal).
- If statistical analysis involves multiple tests or comparisons, proper adjustment of significance level for chance outcomes was applied.
- Power issues are considered in statistical studies with small sample sizes.
- In qualitative research that relies on words instead of numbers, basic requirements of data reliability, validity, trustworthiness, and absence of bias were fulfilled.

Reporting of Statistical Analyses
- The assumptions underlying the use of statistics are considered, given the data collected.
- The statistics are reported correctly and appropriately.
- The number of analyses is appropriate.
- Measures of functional significance, such as effect size or proportion of variance accounted for, accompany hypothesis-testing analysis.

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Manuscript review

Presentation of Results
- Results are organized in a way that is easy to understand.
- Results are presented effectively; the results are contextualized.
- The results are complete.
- The amount of data presented is sufficient and appropriate.
- Tables, graphs, or figures are used judiciously and agree with the text.

Discussion and Conclusion: Interpretation
- The conclusions are clearly stated; key points stand out.
- The conclusions follow from the design, methods, and results; justification of conclusions is well articulated.
- Interpretations of the results are appropriate; the conclusions are accurate (not misleading).
- The study limitations are discussed.
- Alternative interpretations for the findings are considered.
- Statistical differences are distinguished from meaningful differences.
- Personal perspectives or values related to interpretations are discussed.
- Practical significance or theoretical implications are discussed; guidance for future studies is offered.

Title, Authors and Abstract
- The title is clear and informative.
- The title is representative of the content and breadth of the study (not misleading).
- The title captures the importance of the study and the attention of the reader.
- The number of authors appears to be appropriate given the study.
- The abstract is complete (thorough); essential details are presented.
- The results in the abstract are presented in sufficient and specific detail.
- The conclusions in the abstract are justified by the information in the abstract and the text.
- There are no inconsistencies in detail between the abstract and the text.
- All of the information in the abstract is present in the text.
- The abstract overall is congruent with the text; the abstract gives the same impression as the text.

Presentation and Documentation
- The text is well written and easy to follow.
- The vocabulary is appropriate.
- The content is complete and fully congruent.
- The manuscript is well organized.
- The data reported are accurate (e.g., numbers add up) and appropriate; tables and figures are used effectively and agree with the text
- Reference citations are complete and accurate.

Scientific Conduct
- There are no instances of plagiarism.
- Ideas and materials of others are correctly attributed.
- Prior publication by the author(s) of substantial portions of the data or study is appropriately acknowledged.
- There is no apparent conflict of interest.
- There is an explicit statement of approval by an institutional review board (IRB) for studies directly involving human subjects or data about them.

*Reprinted with permission from *Academic Medicine*, journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges. This "Checklist of Review Criteria" from the Task Force of Academic Medicine and the GEA-RIME Committee was originally published as Appendix 1 in Vol. 76, No. 9 (September 2001) *Academic Medicine*.

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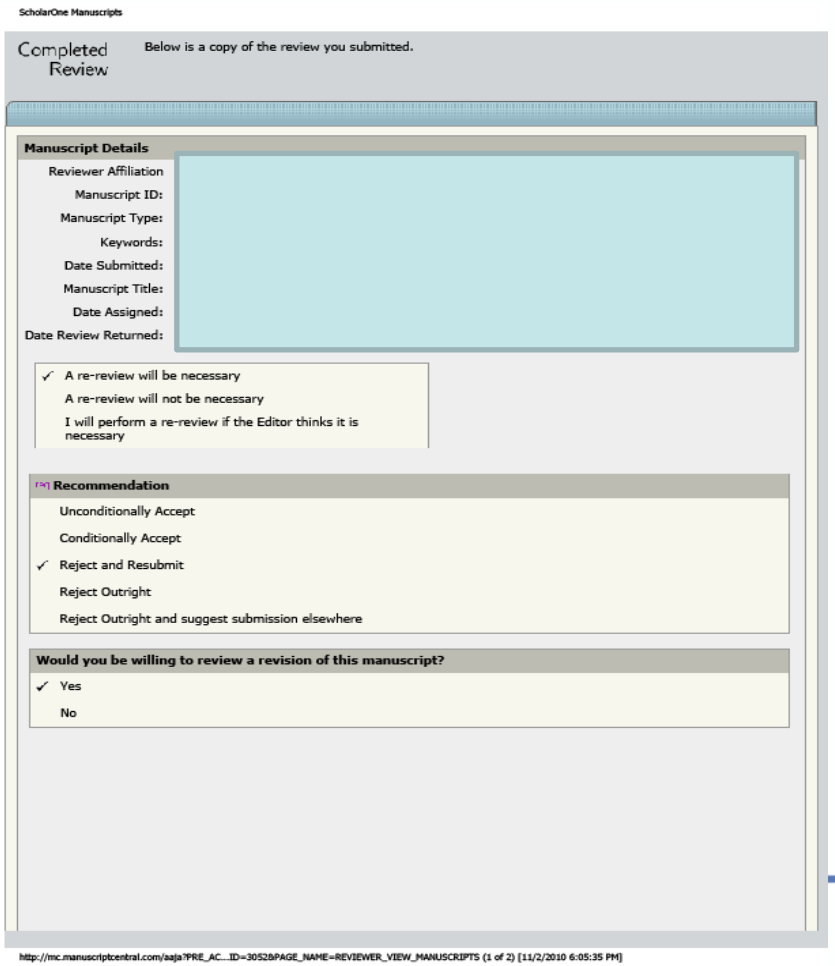

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Completed Review

Below is a copy of the review you submitted.

Manuscript Details

Reviewer Affiliation
Manuscript ID:
Manuscript Type:
Keywords:
Date Submitted:
Manuscript Title:
Date Assigned:
Date Review Returned:

- ✓ A re-review will be necessary
- A re-review will not be necessary
- I will perform a re-review if the Editor thinks it is necessary

Recommendation

- Unconditionally Accept
- Conditionally Accept
- ✓ Reject and Resubmit
- Reject Outright
- Reject Outright and suggest submission elsewhere

Would you be willing to review a revision of this manuscript?

- ✓ Yes
- No

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Manuscript review

ScholarOne Manuscripts

Comments

Confidential Comments to the Associate Editor

Lovely (over)enthusiastic authors reporting a small interesting study with promising results. Worth another look I think.

Comments to the Author

General
This paper presents an evaluation of a small pilot short term community singing program for older people. The findings show some promise for this type of program to increase social well-being. The authors tend to overstate the significance of the findings, given the quality of the data.

Specific
Abstract
Provide a structured abstract.

Introduction
Page 1 line 28: Provide a reference.
Page 1 line 43: Delete of.
Page 1 line 45: Reference 13 is out of date. Update with a current reference.
Page 1 lines 59 to Page 2 line 12: this section belongs in the methods, not the Introduction

Methods
Page 2 line 16: Delete and materials
Page 2 Line 19: Specify which city in Australia.
Describe Silver Chain for readers unfamiliar with this organisation.
Page 2 line 29: How was Dementia screened? What tool was used? Who administered the tool?

Results and Discussion
Provide two tables. It is not appropriate to combine these two sets of data.
Page 3 lines 58-59: This finding may be overstated, considering the study design and number of participants. The authors need to be more circumspect about their inferences from these data.
There is no data presented on changes in GDS, UCLA and SF36 pre to post-test. If there were no significant differences, then this needs to be stated, or this analysis should not be described in the methods.
Have the names of participants been changed within the qualitative data to protect the privacy of the participants?
Page 4 line 16: Delete (8)?
The limitations of the project should be discussed.

Conclusions
Page 6 line 13: The term significant impact has a specific scientific meaning, and is an overstated inference from these data. See the comment above. While the authors are clearly enthusiastic, they do need to be more circumspect with their conclusions from these data.
Page 6 line 22: Delete actually.
The authors should acknowledge that the limitations of this study mean that more research is needed to confirm the impact of short programs of this sort.

Files attached

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Examples of poor reviews

- "Excellent study. On page 6 line 48 I would modify the sentence "[XX] participants were SIGNIFICANTLY older than the [XX] participants.""
- "A well constructed, interesting and informative paper."
- "A good overview of the evidence - although somewhat brief. I recommend it be published"

Examples of good short reviews

- “This is an important topic and the study appears to have been constructed well. However, the thesis of the paper and therefore the study, is not clear. The method is not described adequately and the data analysis section lacks important detail. There is not explanation of how the raw data resulted in the three nominated categories nor how the data analysis process was completed. I believe that the paper needs further work before it is ready for publication.”

Examples of good short reviews

- “This is a small study of a pilot mentoring scheme for ageing researchers. Mentoring schemes have been avaiable for many years and I could not discern any differences in this particular scheme. The small sample size precluded any inferences which could be generalised to other students. The evaluation of such a scheme needs to be more rigorous than subjective satisfaction.”

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Writing

- The process of writing and submitting your article
- What an editor asks
- What the AJA requires
- Getting some feedback on your article

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Tools for writing a coherent article

- Start with a 20-word main message
- Mind map
- Working abstract
  - What you did
  - Why you did it
  - What you found
  - What it means (to theory and practice)
- Write for a specific audience and journal
- Get good feedback
- (Take care of the details)

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Would your manuscript do well in a critical appraisal exercise?

Eg RCTs

- Was the trial registered? If not, were the pre-specified hypotheses published before data analysis?
- Is the trial truly randomised? Reject if allocation by date of birth, alternate, day of the week
- How blind is the trial in terms of treatments given and outcomes measured?
- How effective was follow-up?
- Have important outcomes (e.g. death) been excluded?
- Have the results been put into context by inclusion in a systematic review of similar trials?

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