

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Rejected epidemiologic manuscripts: food for thought



To the Editor:

Manuscripts including epidemiologic manuscripts are written by the scientists for a variety of motives which might include to share new findings with colleagues, to advance human knowledge, to solve patients' or communities' problems, to achieve accountability to the scientific community and to society at large, to get promotion, or to obtain new research grants [1]. Nonetheless, in the process of submitting and reviewing, manuscripts might be rejected for diverse reasons. In my point of view, the most important reasons could be classified into four following categories:

1. The manuscript does not lie within the scope of the target journal.
2. The manuscript is not written in a professional way.
3. The manuscript has fatal shortcomings especially within its materials and methods.
4. The manuscript is not adding something new to existing knowledge.

If we as the authors of epidemiologic manuscripts have a rejected manuscript for the first and/or the second reason, we should not worry. With a careful revision based on the comments of reviewers and/or editors, we have a great chance to get it published in another journal. Evidence suggests that a rather substantial proportion of the epidemiologic published articles, that is, up to 62%, have a history of rejection [2]. Therefore, receiving a rejection letter does not put an end to the integrity of a manuscript unless, it has been rejected for the third and/or the fourth reasons.

However, if we as the authors of epidemiologic manuscripts have a rejected manuscript because it either inherited fatal shortcomings or did not add something new to literature, we have no further chance of publishing it in another prestigious epidemiologic journal. Instead, we

should think carefully on why we designed an inappropriate study [3] that inherited fatal shortcomings.

We should also think carefully on why we did not carry out a comprehensive literature review to avoid carrying out a repetitive study, bearing in mind that having not done a comprehensive literature review before embarking on a new research project is a form of questionable research misconduct [4], which not only wastes our time, energy, and budget but also confronts us with a rejected manuscript.

Estimates have shown that only in 2010 nearly 85% of research investment in biomedical research, that is, \$200 billion, is wasted [5]. Therefore, we as epidemiologists who know the methodology of biomedical research rather well have a mission to help ourselves and perhaps others to avoid designing research, which ends up as a rejected unpublishable manuscript.

Mohsen Rezaeian
Social Medicine Department
Occupational Environmental Research Center
Rafsanjan Medical School
Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences
Rafsanjan, Iran
Tel.: 03915234003; fax: 03915225209.
E-mail address: moeygmr2@yahoo.co.uk

References

- [1] Knottnerus JA, Tugwell P. Communicating research to the peers. *J Clin Epidemiol* 2007;60:645–7.
- [2] Hall SA, Wilcox AJ. The fate of epidemiologic manuscripts: a study of papers submitted to epidemiology. *Epidemiology* 2007;18:262–5.
- [3] Rezaeian M. The application of publication guidelines should extend to cover their designing stage and protocol writing. *Ann Epidemiol* 2013;23:815.
- [4] Rezaeian M. A review on the diverse types of research misconduct. *Middle East J Fam Med* 2014;12(7):43–4.
- [5] Chalmers I, Glasziou P. Avoidable waste in the production and reporting of research evidence. *Lancet* 2009;374:86–9.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2014.12.005>