

# Manuscript Writing

**Correspondence to:**  
Phillip Leventhal  
pleventhal@uclincs.com

## Guidelines for manuscript writing: Here to help

Although sometimes maligned, guidelines make manuscript writing easier and increase the chances of getting published. A good set of guidelines can be used as a checklist (many even include checklists) to help organize, write, format and submit a manuscript.

Manuscript writing guidelines are sets of instructions put together by journal editors and other experts to help ensure that all manuscripts attain a uniform level of quality and ethics. Guidelines can also answer questions, help avoid pitfalls, and ensure that the manuscript is in agreement with standard medical writing practice. In this way, guidelines can reduce the chance that your manuscript is rejected and they help save time. Following guidelines can also improve the chances that the results are included in systematic reviews and meta-analyses.

Although guidelines are important, they are not laws. They often have to be adapted to the specific needs of the manuscript. In some cases, guidelines will insist on something that you consider irrelevant. Regardless, they can be of great help in reducing the number of problems and amount of time spent in completing a manuscript.

Following is a list of the key guidelines used for manuscript writing. The different guidelines and their contents are also summarized in Table 1.

## General guidelines for manuscripts

### *Instructions for authors*

The instructions for authors might seem like an obvious guideline to follow, but surprisingly, many submitted manuscripts do not fully comply with them. This is a potential reason for rejection – or at least a source of irritation for editors and reviewers. Although a checklist is not normally part of the instructions for authors, it's a good idea to print them out and use them as a quality control checklist before you submit your manuscript.

### *ICMJE Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts*

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE; <http://www.icmje.org>) publishes the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> These

are some of the most useful general guidelines for preparing a manuscript for submission to a journal, and all manuscript writers should be aware of their content. The uniform requirements include specific instructions on:

- What should be included on the title page and in the abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion.
- How to cite references, prepare illustrations, and use abbreviations.
- Ethical reporting of research, including authorship, the role of contributors, disclosure of conflicts of interest, privacy and confidentiality, and protection of human subjects and animals in research.

### *EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators of Scientific Articles to be Published in English*

The Guidelines for Authors and Translators of Scientific Articles to be Published in English,<sup>2</sup> published by the European Association of Science Editors (EASE; <http://www.ease.org.uk/>), are intended to help non-native English manuscript writers, although they could really be used by any manuscript writer. These guidelines explain:

- How to write completely, concisely, and clearly in English?
- What should and should not be in each section of a manuscript?

The guidelines also include detailed appendices covering the key elements of abstracts; how to avoid ambiguity and build cohesion in English writing; ethics; the use of plurals; how to simplify English text; and differences between spelling in American and British English.

To help non-native English writers, the guidelines are available in 16 languages in addition to English.

## Reporting guidelines

### *Reporting of randomized clinical trials: the CONSORT statement*

The CONSORT statement<sup>3</sup> is probably the most important set of guidelines for most manuscript

Table 1: Guidelines for manuscript writing

	General guidelines			Reporting guidelines					Ethics guidelines			
	EQUATOR Network	Instructions for authors	ICMJE Uniform Requirements	EASE Guidelines	CONSORT Statement	PRISMA Statement	MOOSE Statement	STROBE Statement	TREND Statement	GPP and GPP2	EMWA Guidelines	CSE White Papers
Manuscript organization	•	•	•									
Tips on writing manuscripts	•			•								
Content of each manuscript section	•	•	•	•								
All articles	•											
Randomized clinical trials	•											
Systematic reviews and meta-analysis	•				•							
Observational studies	•							•				
Non-randomized studies	•								•			
Text format: font, spacing, length, etc.		•										
Instructions for making figures and tables		•										
Authorship and acknowledgments	•									•		•
Conflicts of interest	•									•		•
Use of medical writers and ghost writing	•									•		•

writers. The objective of the CONSORT statement is to enable ‘readers to understand a trial’s design, conduct, analysis and interpretation, and to assess the validity of its results’. In other words, the goal is to ensure complete transparency from the authors.

The most useful part of the CONSORT statement is the CONSORT checklist, which is a detailed list of exactly what should be in each section of a manuscript reporting a randomized clinical trial. This is especially important for the complete and accurate reporting of the methods and results.

The CONSORT statement also details how to describe the flow of patients through the clinical trial. In particular, they recommend using a patient flow diagram and they provide an example. This flow diagram is often referred to as a ‘CONSORT diagram’.

In some cases, it will not be relevant or possible to fulfill all of the items for all studies, so adapt the guidelines as needed. Furthermore, although the CONSORT statement is intended for reporting randomized clinical trials, it can be adapted to other study designs.

*Other key reporting guidelines*

Several guidelines have been published for reporting studies with a non-randomized design. Some of the most important guidelines include the following:

- *STROBE Statement*.<sup>4</sup> These are guidelines for reporting observational studies. They include a checklist for what should be included in each section of the manuscript.
- *TREND Statement*.<sup>5</sup> These are guidelines for reporting studies with non-randomized designs. They include a checklist for what should be included in each section of the manuscript.
- *PRISMA Statement*.<sup>6</sup> These are guidelines for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses. They are mainly intended for systematic reviews and meta-analyses of randomized clinical studies but can be adapted to other types of studies.
- *MOOSE Statement*.<sup>7</sup> These are guidelines for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of observational studies. Note that the MOOSE statement has not been updated since its original publication in 2000, so to ensure completeness, you might also consider referring to the PRISMA statement if writing a systematic review or meta-analysis of observational studies.

*EQUATOR network*

The EQUATOR network (<http://www.equator-network.org>) deserves special mention because it

contains a wide variety of resources for the reporting of medical research and is especially helpful to manuscript writers. No matter what kind of article you are writing, you should be able to find a link to a relevant guideline in the EQUATOR resource center (<http://www.equator-network.org/resource-centre/library-of-health-research-reporting/>). The use and aims of the EQUATOR network was previously discussed in detail in a 2009 article in *The Write Stuff* by Catherine Mary.<sup>8</sup>

## Ethics guidelines for manuscript writers

### *EMWA Guidelines on the Role of Medical Writers in Developing Peer-Reviewed Publications*

In 2005, EMWA published ethical guidelines for medical writers who prepare manuscripts on behalf of named authors.<sup>9</sup> In part, these guidelines were intended to help address the problem of 'ghost authorship'. The guidelines also cover the nature of the relationship between the medical writer and the study sponsor and authors; whether medical writers should list authors and, if not, how they should be acknowledged; the writers' professional and ethical responsibilities; and access of medical writers to study data.

### *GPP and GPP2*

Good Publication Practice (GPP),<sup>10</sup> published in 2003, was developed by the Council of Science Editors 'to ensure that clinical trials sponsored by pharmaceutical companies are published in a responsible and ethical manner'. In particular, they provide guidelines to help avoid publication bias and to clarify the relationship between pharmaceutical companies and academic investigators. In particular, GPP gives guidance on publication standards, disclosure of potential conflicts of interest, what constitutes unacceptable prior or concurrent publication, identification of clinical trials, authorship, and the proper role of professional medical writers. GPP2 was a 2009 update of GPP<sup>11</sup> and is a refinement of the positions stated in GPP. A detailed discussion and critique of GPP2 was published in 2009 by Nancy Milligan and Adam Jacobs in *The Write Stuff*.<sup>12</sup>

### *Council of Science Editors white papers*

The Council of Science Editors (<http://www.councilscienceeditors.org>) has published a series of documents covering their editorial policies. These include guidelines on author and sponsor responsibilities, who should be an author, who should

receive an acknowledgment, and disclosure of potential conflicts of interest.<sup>13</sup>

## Summary

Guidelines are to help you write a complete and accurate manuscript and therefore to increase the chance that your manuscript is accepted and read. All manuscript writers should be aware of and use them in the preparation of manuscripts. They are not laws, but they are excellent sources of guidance and instruction.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Elise Langdon-Neuner for background information that helped form the basis of this article.

## References

1. International Steering Committee of Medical Editors. Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. *Br Med J* 1978;1:1334-6.
2. EASE guidelines for authors and translators of scientific articles to be published in English. 2011. Available from [http://www.ease.org.uk/Guidelines\\_preface/index.shtml](http://www.ease.org.uk/Guidelines_preface/index.shtml). Accessed 1 February 2012.
3. Schulz KF, Altman DG, Moher D. CONSORT 2010 statement: updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials. *PLoS Med* 2010;7:e1000251.
4. von Elm E, Altman DG, Egger M, Pocock SJ, Gotsche PC, Vandenbroucke JP. The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) statement: guidelines for reporting observational studies. *J Clin Epidemiol* 2008;61:344-9.
5. Des Jarlais DC, Lyles C, Crepaz N. Improving the reporting quality of nonrandomized evaluations of behavioral and public health interventions: the TREND statement. *Am J Public Health* 2004;94:361-6.
6. Liberati A, Altman DG, Tetzlaff J, *et al.* The PRISMA statement for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of studies that evaluate health care interventions: explanation and elaboration. *PLoS Med* 2009;6:e1000100.
7. Stroup DF, Berlin JA, Morton SC, *et al.* Meta-analysis of observational studies in epidemiology: a proposal for reporting. Meta-analysis Of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (MOOSE) group. *JAMA* 2000;283:2008-12.
8. Mary C. EQUATOR network: an umbrella organisation to tackle bias in scientific literature. *The Write Stuff* 2009;18:37-8.
9. Jacobs A, Wager E. European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) guidelines on the role of medical writers in developing peer-reviewed publications. *The Write Stuff* 2005;2005:317-21.
10. Wager E, Tumas JA, Field EA, Glazer NB, Schulz G, Grossman L. Good publication practice guideline for pharmaceutical companies. *Can J Gastroenterol* 2000;14:749.
11. Graf C, Battisti WP, Bridges D, *et al.* Research methods & reporting. Good publication practice for

- communicating company sponsored medical research: the GPP2 guidelines. *BMJ* 2009;339:b4330.
12. Milligan N, Jacobs A. GPP2 guidelines: recommendations for good publication practice in biomedical research. *The Write Stuff* 2010;19:64-5.
  13. CSE's white paper on promoting integrity in scientific journal publications, 2009 Update. 2009. Available at: <http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3331>. Accessed 1 February 2012.

Phillip Leventhal  
pleventhal@4clinics.com

## A comprehensive plagiarism and ethical writing guide

Recently when working with a junior writer on an article, I noticed that they had copied and pasted several chunks of text that were not their own. Although there are apparently cultural differences in how plagiarism is viewed, plagiarism is not acceptable for manuscripts; it is considered unethical and a definite reason to have your manuscript rejected.

To help students and new writers understand plagiarism and other ethical issues around scientific writing, Dr Miguel Roig of the Office of Research Integrity at St John's University wrote 'Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing'. This

is an excellent and comprehensive document and can be accessed for free on-line at <http://facpub.stjohns.edu/~roigm/plagiarism/>.

This detailed guide covers not only plagiarism but also 'other crimes of writing', including ethically questionable citation (referencing) practices (especially careless referencing), ethically questionable writing practices (e.g. selective reporting of results), and authorship and conflicts of interest. The guide also includes 15 pages of exercises to help teach the issues discussed in the first 49 pages. Although the printed version is a long read, it is an excellent reference and teaching resource – and fortunately – the on-line version includes a home page with hot links to each of the specific topics.

## Publishing in a digital world: Strategies to maximise visibility and citations

The world of academic publishing has changed enormously over the past two decades. As a student in the mid-1990s, I have fond memories of library study sessions surrounded by shelves bowing with the weight of knowledge. A less positive recollection is trying to flatten the thick, bound journals under the photocopier lid. Nowadays students and researchers rarely visit the library, instead accessing research articles almost exclusively online.

The shift from print-driven to online journals requires minor, yet important changes in writing style to raise the visibility of an article and therefore maximize the likelihood it will be downloaded and cited.

After 40 years as a print-driven journal, *Politics & Policy* (Wiley-Blackwell) entered 2012 as an online only, subscribed-access publication. In an excellent article,<sup>1</sup> the editor summarizes the benefits of

online distribution and then details five strategies to enhance an article's profile in the online environment.

Most importantly, you want people to find your article, so choose a search engine-friendly title. Bear in mind that it is a machine that conducts the preliminary sort and humans the second, so save clever puns for subheadings. The best are narrative titles that capture the essence of the article and include keywords.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, articles with longer titles tend to be cited more than those with shorter ones.<sup>3</sup> Take time to settle on a title and trial its impact by running searches in various engines; be prepared to refine it.

To tempt further reading and download, invest time in writing structured abstracts.<sup>4</sup> Repeating keywords and phrases that were used in the title will boost search engine rankings. Excellent examples of effective and less effective abstracts are provided by Wiley-Blackwell Author Services.<sup>5</sup>

Structure the main body of the text using subheadings to enable straightforward navigation

using 'jump to' access and ensure that your article is fully connected to the literature in which it is embedded. Writing an engaging, comprehensive literature review can increase the chances of citation. Cite a range of articles, books, and online data sources; the numbers of pages to which articles are connected also feature in the result-ranking algorithms of search engines. To enable reference-linking, provide all the webpages of the articles cited and, where relevant, the dates accessed.

Bring your research to life by using media and links creatively. Gone are the days when a coloured graph was sufficient to impress; now it's videos, podcasts, sound files, and animations. For further ideas, check out 'The Periodic Table of Visualisation Methods'.<sup>6</sup> Novel and exciting ways of representing data will lead both to increased citation and encourage download by those seeking tools for teaching. Resources and editing software are freely available.<sup>7</sup>

Lastly, raise the profile of your research by disseminating your published article as widely as possible. The more connections to your article, the higher it will rank in search engine results. Do not be modest: send your article to colleagues and broadcast your research to the world using the plethora of modern communication and educational tools, including Twitter, Moodle, and Wikipedia, to name just a few. Many excellent resources exist to help launch one's online presence.<sup>8,9</sup>

A new world of journal publishing is rapidly unfolding. While some of the suggested adaptations may seem daunting, perhaps particularly the adoption of social media, taking a step back to consider and modify one's approach to publishing online will undoubtedly reap rewards.

Reviewing this article has certainly given me food for thought. I am particularly excited by the opportunity to use different media, but what will I do with my empty shelves?

## References

1. Norman ER. Maximizing journal article citation online: readers, robots, and research visibility. *Polit Policy* 2012;40:1–12.
2. The London School of Economics and Political Science. Available from <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/06/21/your-essential-%e2%80%98how-to-%e2%80%99-guide-to-choosing-article-titles/>. Accessed 14 March 2012.
3. Habibzadeh F, Yadollahie M. Are shorter article titles more attractive for citations? Cross-sectional study of 22 scientific journals. *Croat Med J* 2010;51:165–170.
4. The London School of Economics and Political Science. Available from <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/06/20/essential-guide-writing-good-abstracts/>. Accessed 14 March 2012.
5. Wiley-Blackwell Author Services. Optimizing your article for search engines. Available from <http://authorservices.wiley.com/bauthor/seo.asp>. Accessed 14 March 2012.
6. Lengler R, Eppler MJ. Periodic table of visualization methods. Available from [http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic\\_table/periodic\\_table.html](http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html). Accessed 14 March 2012.
7. Lafaye V, Bowling K. The online author's survival guide. *Compass Journals*, Wiley-Blackwell. Available from <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/pdf/OnlineAuthorsSurvivalGuide.pdf>. Accessed 14 March 2012.
8. Vitae Digital Researcher meeting 2012. Available from <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/315321-480251/Digital-Researcher-2012.html#pageInfo>. Accessed 14 March 2012.
9. Mollett A, Moran D, Dunleavy P. Using Twitter in university research, teaching and impact activities. *LSE Public Policy Group* 2011. Available from <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/09/29/twitter-guide/>. Accessed 14 March 2012.

Katharine Evans

*School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK*  
Kath.Evans@ed.ac.uk

## Retractions and misconduct: *science* presents the lessons it has learnt

The Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) held its annual European seminar in London on 16 March 2012. The important topic, 'Correcting the literature', aligns with COPE's retraction guidelines for editors.<sup>1</sup>

A highlight of the seminar was the presentation given by Andrew Sugden, Deputy Editor of *Science*. He started by defining the good, the bad and the

ugly authors in the context of retractions: good authors initiate the process, usually by writing to the editor with a request for retraction because they have discovered an error. Bad authors are those who when a retraction is appropriate refuse to sign the retraction and the ugly refuse to retract despite their institution's findings of misconduct. In *Science* the good outweigh the rest. From the reaction of medical journal editors in the audience this might not be the case for their journals.

The past 10 years have seen a jump of more than 15-fold in the number of published papers retracted from scientific journals. Sugden had traced the first retraction published in *Science* back to 1963. In the 1990s the journal retracted eight papers. Between 2000 and 2010 there were 50 retractions including the infamous eight papers authored by the physicist Jan Hendrik Schön and the two by the stem cell researcher Woo Suk Hwang. About a third of *Science's* retractions have been for misconduct, the rest for seemingly honest error. The mean time from initiation of investigations to retraction in *Science* is 2.8 years (maximum 8 years). An expression of concern, of which *Science* has published eight, indicates an investigation has been initiated or the journal has worries. The journal might be alerted to a problem by an anonymous whistle blower, the corresponding author (self), co-authors, an identified or unidentified correspondent, and an author's institution or a reviewer.

Investigations have to be handled sensitively bearing in mind language barriers, the involvement of multiple institutions/countries and the human element of co-authors. Attempted suicide and hospitalizations may have been provoked by such investigations. Sugden also warned of the danger that intense media scrutiny can lead to a journal acting too fast.

The wording of retractions is important. They should be informative stating why the retraction is being made rather than a bland statement that the data are no longer reliable as in the following example given by Sugden 'I have decided to retract the paper "Virus specific splicing inhibitor in extracts from cells infected with HIV-1"' - by D. Gutman and myself published on 16 September 1988 issue of *Science* (volume 241, p. 1492). The data in that paper should no longer be considered reliable. Carlos J. Goldenberg'.

A retraction might be of a part or of the entire paper. Partial retractions are very rare, and often relate to interpretation. In a recent case a paper was partially retraction because samples were contaminated. *Science* published an expression of concern in July 2010 relating to the paper in which the researchers claimed to have found an infectious retrovirus, XMRV, in the blood of patients with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). Three laboratories had contributed to the study. However, as stated in the expression of concern, at least 10 other laboratories were unable to detect the virus.


In September the authors published a partial retraction of a figure and supplemental figure and table, all of which presented data from contaminated samples. Subsequently the journal lost

confidence in the paper altogether and most authors agreed to a full retraction but consensus on the wording of the retraction could not be reached between the editor and all the authors. As a result the editor himself took the rare step in December 2011 of retracting the article stating that multiple laboratories, including those of the original authors, had failed to detect the virus in CFS patient. Furthermore there was evidence of poor quality control of the experiments.<sup>3</sup> A complicating element in this case was pressure against retraction from patient's groups which had hailed the paper as allaying skepticism about the existence of the disease.

*Science* retracted two papers in 2006 published by a group at Seoul National University led by Woo Suk Hwang.<sup>4</sup> In the papers the researchers claimed that they had created stem-cell lines from cloned human embryos. This caused a sensation because it raised the prospect of using stem cells genetically matched to patients to cure debilitating disorders such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. Investigation of the papers was prompted by anonymous information received by the journal casting suspicion on images presented in one of the papers. Hwang eventually admitted that the data had been falsified; the cells were not cloned but were from in vitro fertilization embryos.

*Science*, Sugden said, had been shaken by the Hwang case. The journal commissioned an investigation as a result of which the editors were satisfied that the peer review had been thorough. The report produced, *Science's* response and an editorial are available on the science website.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the report *Science* put the following safeguard procedures in place:

1. All authors are notified by the journal when a manuscript with their name on it is submitted. About once every two weeks authors say they did not know about the submission and when this happens the manuscript is rejected until the authors sort out the problem.
2. Authors are required to complete a detailed form giving their level of participation and a conflict of interest form must be completed by all authors, not just the corresponding author.
3. The senior author from each group is required to have examined the raw data their group has produced.
4. The journal seeks to minimizing restrictions on data access by requiring that all authors agree to the data being available for inspection. The general information for authors includes a



## To retract or not to retract?

	Correction	Expression of Concern	Retraction	No action / Self-correcting scientific process	Letter or Technical Comment exchange
Results unrepeatable	x	x	x	x	x
Data not available	x	x	x		
Fabrication/ plagiarism		x -> -> ->	X		
Interpretation/ conclusions questioned			x	x	x
(lack of) citation	(x)			x	

statement that is far more reaching than anything that can be found in medical journal author guidelines: ‘All data necessary to understand, assess and extend the conclusion of the manuscript must be available to any reader of Science’.<sup>6</sup> Of special note is the word ‘extend’ in this statement.

- The journal checks all figures at revision for inappropriate adjustments.

Had these precautions helped? Sugden’s comment was that no great difference can be seen between the retraction rate before and after the Hwang case.

Papers attract more scrutiny from the journal if they are multidisciplinary or a number of different laboratories and/or countries are involved. These are fertile factors for insufficient consultation, which can result even in honest error. Other aspects that might give rise to suspicion are where the results are too good to be believed or if the journal requests additional experiments/data which are produced extraordinarily quickly.

Recent years have seen an increasing trend for more supplemental material published with articles.

This broadens the scope for suspect material and raises the question of whether this data gets the scrutiny it needs. *Science* tries to ensure the data are always essential to the integrity and quality of the paper, while one journal has even decided not to accept supplemental anymore.

The slide below, kindly provided by Andrew Sugden from his presentation and reproduced with his permission, summarizes the action that he and his colleagues take when irregularities or errors in published papers come to light.

### References

- <http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines>.
- Goldberg CJ. Retraction: virus-specific splicing inhibitor in extracts from cells infected with HIV-1. *Science* 1999;243(4887):12.
- Alberts B. Retraction. *Science* 2011;334(6063):1636.
- Kennedy D. Editorial retraction. *Science* 2006;311(5759):335.
- [http://www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/misc/webfeat/hwang2005/#section\\_committee-report](http://www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/misc/webfeat/hwang2005/#section_committee-report).
- <http://www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/contribinfo/index.xhtml>.

Elise Langdon-Neuner  
editor@emwa.org

## Retraction Watch

Although it is possible to search MEDLINE and the Web of Science for retractions there is no single database of scientific article retractions. The best way to keep abreast of retractions is to visit or sign up to receive alerts from the Retraction Watch blog (<http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com/>). The blog was set up in August 2010 by two American medical reporters Adam Marcus and Ivan Oransky. The blog is reader-friendly and provides regular information about retractions and the fate of authors whose articles are retracted.

In future CrossMark (see below) should also make it easier to identify articles that have been retracted.

## CrossMark: Communicating article metadata to readers

Is a new initiative from CrossRef to communicate information about an article to readers. It will be particularly useful for communicating corrections and retractions. Although a retraction or correction will be noted on PubMed and the publisher's websites up until now the first articles brought up by a Google search might not indicate such post-publication changes. The pilot can be viewed on <http://crossmarksupport.labs.crossref.org>.

Any document that has a DOI (often assigned on acceptance of a manuscript) including online early articles, pdfs, HTMLs, and abstracts can have a CrossMark. When the viewer clicks on the CrossMark logo a box pops up giving the status of the article with, for example the publisher, publication date, and DOI. By clicking on another tab a record is displayed giving metadata, for example if it has been peer reviewed, its publication history and copyright holder, funding disclosures. The status will also indicate updates, for example a correction to the paper.

## Open peer review

Throughout 2012 Elsevier will be piloting a project with their Agriculture and Forest Meteorology

articles. Peer reviewers' comments will be published with articles on their SciVerse ScienceDirect portal. Reviewers will be informed before their comments are published and given the option of having their name included with the comment. It is hoped that this step will attract better reviewers (only good quality reviews will be published) and improve the value of the articles. If successful the intention is to extend the project to other journals in their portfolio in due course.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence that open review improves the quality of reviewers' comments comes from a study conducted at the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health by Jeffrey T. Leek and co-workers.<sup>2</sup> They used an online game to compare open and closed peer review and found that when the reviewers' anonymity was removed from the review process reviewers spent more time reviewing, their reviews were more accurate and they formed significantly more cooperative interactions with authors, all of which could lead to a decrease in the risk of errors in reviewing.

## References

1. [http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authored\\_newsitem.cws\\_home/companynews05\\_02281](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authored_newsitem.cws_home/companynews05_02281).
2. <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0026895>.

Elise Langdon-Neuner  
editor@emwa.org

## Citing tweets

If you have not needed to know by now you probably will do sooner than you had thought. The answer to the question 'How do I cite a tweet?' is given on the Modern Language Association website ([http://www.mla.org/style/handbook\\_faq/cite\\_a\\_tweet](http://www.mla.org/style/handbook_faq/cite_a_tweet)). It recommends that the tweeter's

real name is given followed by the user name in parenthesis, but without parenthesis if the real name is not used on Twitter. The full text of the tweet should be given within inverted commas followed by the date and time of the tweet as read on the Twitter received. The example give on the site is:



Athar, Solhaib (ReallyVirtual). 'Helicopter hovering above Abbottabad at 1AM (is rare event)'. 1 May 2011, 3:58. Tweet.

The following suggestions are made for the manner in which the tweet can be quoted in the body of the text:

Solhaib Athar noted that the presence of a helicopter at that hour was 'a rare event'.

or

The presence of a helicopter at that hour was 'a rare event' (Athar).

Elise Langdon-Neuner  
editor@emwa.org

## The Global Alliance of Publication Professionals

I am very proud to be able to tell EMWA members that I have recently become involved in a new initiative, the Global Alliance of Publication Professionals (GAPP). GAPP, which consists of myself, Karen Woolley, Cindy Hamilton, Art Gertel, and Gene Snyder, has been set up as a "rapid response force" to deal with stories about medical writers on blogs and in traditional media.

You will doubtless be aware that many negative articles are written about medical writers, particularly in the context of their role in publications in peer-reviewed journals, and often fail to make the crucial distinction between ghostwriters and professional medical writers. GAPP exists to respond to such articles, to educate those who misunderstand what medical writers do, and to be a resource for journalists who need an authoritative source within the medical writing community.

Why do we need GAPP when we already have splendid organisations like EMWA? Organisations like EMWA, AMWA, and ISMPP can and do respond to articles in the press, but they tend to be slow as they usually like to have any statements bearing the organisation's name to be approved by committees. There is therefore a risk that the news

cycle has moved on by the time the response has been approved. Individuals like me also respond to stories, and can do so rapidly, but a response from an individual doesn't have quite the same authority as one from an organisation. GAPP is designed to give the best of both worlds.

GAPP was launched officially at the beginning of February, and has already been active in responding to stories. You can read a couple of our early contributions at <http://bit.ly/f7dCnA> and <http://bit.ly/ybAoqq>.

You can read more about GAPP at <http://gappteam.org/> and you can follow us on Twitter at @GAPPTeam. You can also join our LinkedIn group by following the link from our website.

If you spot any stories in the media that you think merit a GAPP response, then please let us know, either on Twitter or by emailing us at [contact@gappteam.org](mailto:contact@gappteam.org).

Adam Jacobs  
Dianthus Medical Limited  
<http://dianthus.co.uk>  
<http://twitter.com/dianthusmed>