

EDITORIAL

From Manuscript to Article: What Happens After You Submit a Manuscript to *Education for Health*?

Some people wonder what happens after they submit a manuscript. How long does it take before it is published? What proportion of articles is eventually published? How many are rejected? When an author receives reviews and a recommendation for revisions, where does that put her? How often does this occur?

This editorial attempts to clarify the review process that we at *Education for Health* use and are proud of. *Education for Health* aims at readers and writers from all parts of the world. Our authors include people who are engaged in worthy work but may have little or no experience publishing in international, peer reviewed MEDLINE-indexed journals. Some of these authors have few or no local resources for helping them prepare a manuscript, written in English, for an academic journal.

For these reasons, when authors submit articles that have clear potential for achieving publication quality, we offer some guidance. Typically, editors and reviewers provide detailed comments as well as issues to address when rewriting the paper. Authors can also seek help from one of our 36 mentors who are seasoned academics from around the world who have volunteered to help authors. Mentoring can be provided at a distance via E-mail, or “live” during one of the Network: TUFH conferences.

Some results of our review and guidance process are given below. Because of the quite good initial quality of the manuscripts, we are pleased that eventually 75% are published. The average time from first submission to acceptance is 9.5 months.

Review process

Figure 1 presents steps in the review process. After the managing editor and her staff determine that the manuscript is technically correct, they send it to one of the associate editors. If the paper has potential but needs work, the associate editor typically provides specific recommendations and, in a few cases, suggests the use of a mentor. When the associate editor determines that the manuscript is ready to move forward, he or she recommends that it be sent to reviewers.

Results

As stated earlier, the average time between the first submission of a manuscript and its acceptance is 9.5 months. The process has ranged between 4 and 24 months, depending on the number of revisions an author was requested to make and the time it took for the author to return the manuscript to us.

In Table 1 you will find the publication results of the review process in 2002 (Volume 15) and 2003 (Volume 16). (Some of these articles were submitted prior to 2002.) Because of the quality of the manuscripts submitted, the guidance given, and the willingness of authors to make needed revisions, many manuscripts made it all the way through the process. However, the roads to acceptance were diverse.

In Table 2 you will find the status of the manuscripts that were submitted in 2002 and 2003. Please note that some of these manuscripts are still in the review process.

Table 1. The road to publication

	2002 (Vol 15)	2003 (Vol 16)	Total	%
Number of articles published	29	31	60	100
After minor changes	13	6	19	32
After major changes	16	25	41	68
<i>Second revision</i>	10	15	25	42
<i>Third revision</i>	4	9	13	22
<i>Fourth revision</i>	1	1	2	3
<i>Sixth revision</i>	1		1	1

Table 2. Status of submitted articles (as of Feb. 2004)

	2002	2003
Published	27	10
Accepted but not yet published	2	8
Still in review process	12	30
Withdrawn by author	7	3
Removed due to inaction of author	8	0
Rejected without external reviews	5	4
Rejected after external reviews	4	2
Total	65	57

In Table 3 you will see that *Education for Health* truly is an international journal. In 2002 and 2003 we published articles from 25 different countries.

Finally, this careful, time-taking review process would not be possible without the help of many individuals. Mind you, with the exception of the secretariat, these dedicated people do not receive any compensation for the time they invest in this process! Below in Table 4 you will find how many people are involved in maintaining our high standards for *Education for Health*.

Writing an article takes time, some courage and perseverance. It can be rewarding, too. It is nice to see your work in print, but more importantly, you allow others access to your work. Writing is an activity that, above all else, can help you structure your thoughts. If you cannot explain your thoughts to others,

Table 3. Countries of origin of the manuscripts published in Volume 15 (2002) and Volume 16 (2003)

	Vol. 15	Vol. 16
Australia	9	3
Bahrain	1	1
Brazil	1	–
Chile	–	1
Gabon	1	–
Israel	1	–
Italy	1	–
Japan	–	1
Lebanon	–	1
Malaysia	–	1
Nepal	–	3
Netherlands	1	1
New Zealand	–	1
Nigeria	1	–
Norway	1	–
Pakistan	–	1
Republic of South Africa	–	1
Saudi Arabia	1	1
Spain	–	1
Sweden	1	1
Switzerland	1	–
Turkey	–	1
United Kingdom	1	4
United States of America	8	7
West Indies	–	1
Total number of countries	14	18
Total number of articles	29	31

Table 4. Number of people involved in Education for Health

Editor	1
Associate editors	3
Secretariat	2
Reviewers (including Editorial Board members)	137
Mentors	36
Copy editor	1

it may be likely that there are some dark corners in your thinking that you have not yet adequately addressed! The process of writing is something that very few people can do by themselves. That's why we hope we can support you in sharing your important ideas and projects. We hope that we can continue to contribute to your excellent work. If you have suggestions for improvement of our review and mentoring system we would be delighted to hear from you.

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Reference

BLIGH, J. (1998). What happens to manuscripts submitted to the journal? *Medical Education*, 32, 567–570.