

VIEWPOINTS

Acceptance and Rejection of Manuscripts for Publication in the *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*

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Pharmacy education scholarship has flourished with the expansion of colleges and schools and the number of pharmacy faculty members compared with a few years ago. Scholarship of teaching and learning related to experiential education, interprofessional education, patient simulation, and active learning methods of many types is actively being engaged in throughout the academy. Also, our culture of assessment has resulted in all colleges and schools formally assessing learning and thereby generating data to determine the effectiveness of instructional methods, which serves as a basis for scholarly work in instruction. The *Journal* is a well-recognized vehicle for publication of scholarship within the US and international pharmacy education community.

The growth of scholarship in pharmacy education has an upside and downside as competition for space in the *Journal* has increased substantially. Ten years ago the *Journal* received 126 manuscripts and published 4 issues. In 2012 the *Journal* received 390 manuscripts, of which, only approximately 150 will be published, reflecting a 40% acceptance rate.

With the increased competition for publication in the *Journal*, it is important that authors know what will influence acceptance of their manuscript. In general, manuscripts that are of highest interest to *Journal* readers and are of greatest potential use to the broadest range of readers will be given priority for publication. The quality of the work is also a significant consideration. Reviewers' opinions are sought to guide the editor in making editorial decisions. The following are some of the questions that manuscript reviewers are asked to address:

- Is the information presented in the paper of significant interest to the readers?
- Is the purpose or objective of the research clearly stated?
- Are the research methods appropriate and scientifically sound?

- If the manuscript is descriptive of educational theory, content, or processes, is the information new to the majority of *Journal* readers?
- Are the conclusions supported by the data presented?

The most common reason for rejection of manuscripts submitted to the *Journal* is that the article falls outside the scope of the *Journal*. Articles related to some aspect of pharmaceutical or biomedical science, or pharmacy practice topics may be entirely appropriate for a different journal but may not be within the *Journal's* scope unless they focus on instruction of that topic. As the *Journal* has become more visible in the pharmacy education community many submissions have been received from international pharmacy education colleagues. While many international authors have contributed papers of substantial value, articles of local interest only are unlikely to be accepted.

Articles that describe an instructional approach such as a new course or practice experience are turned away if proper assessment of learning was not conducted.¹ Authors should recognize that measurement of perceptions of learning or skill attainment (eg, by a student survey) is generally not an adequate substitute for direct measures of learning or competency.² Survey research standards have become a focus of assessment by reviewers and the editor.³⁻⁶ Articles published in the *Journal* must adhere to survey research standards that have been detailed in the author guidelines and related articles. Articles not adhering to the standards may be rejected without peer review.

Another common reason for manuscript rejection is when the article does not provide sufficient new information even if the methods were sound. Finally, the editors are mandated by *Journal* and National Library of Medicine policy to reject any work that involves human subjects but was not approved by an investigational review board, or was deemed by the board to be exempt from review.

While the increasing number of manuscript submissions is a noteworthy positive trend, the *Journal* editors take no pleasure in rejecting an article that has been submitted. However, the editors do have the responsibility to

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maintain the *Journal's* focus on pharmacy education and ensure that published manuscripts are of the highest quality. The editors try to achieve a delicate balance between the need for authors to have their work published, the interests of *Journal* readers, and the limitations on the number of articles that can be published each year.

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