

# Approach to Publish Medical Literature- A Guide for Students in the Field of Healthcare

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## ABSTRACT

Significant contributions have been made to the field of medical science by numerous students in the formative stages of their career. While medical research was earlier an exclusive domain of residents and senior doctors, we are now witnessing a positive trend of increasingly more number of undergraduate students indulging in research projects and today, research has become an integral and indispensable component of medical education. While undertaking research activities, it is imperative for young researchers to understand the importance of publishing quality data in journals of repute, without compromising on any aspect of the process.

**Keywords:** Impact factor, Indexing, Journal, Research

The journey from inception of a research study to completion is a long, arduous one which a student undertakes in addition to his/her existing commitments to academics. Undergraduate medical research, its problems and solutions have been much discussed and debated since a long time. This article summarises the author's experiences on the last in a series of hurdles faced by undergraduates in their quest of completing a quality research study- Publication!

"It's not how you start that's important, but how you finish!"-  
Jim George

Although the above quote holds true for most of our academic pursuits, it is of special significance in the world of research. Now-a-days, although many undergraduate students do get involved in research activities, a high rate of attrition is witnessed amongst these students, with very few of them eventually publishing their data [1]. We may also lose out on the fruits borne by their hard work if they do not publish their manuscripts in quality peer reviewed journals. There are multiple criteria which may help students find the right platform to publish their research. Students must ensure that they approach only journals which are indexed with reputed agencies such as Medline, PubMed Central, Citation Index, Sciences Citation Index, Expanded Embase, Scopus or Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) to ensure that the articles undergo a thorough peer review. This would also enable students to stay away from predatory journals which bypass this vital stage of peer review, thus assuring publication with a quick turnaround time in exchange of a hefty publication fee [2]. Another criterion for choosing the right journal could be the impact factor of the journal. It is a parameter which assesses the importance or rank of a journal by measuring the frequency with which the average article published in that particular journal has been cited by authors in a given period of time. Both the indexing status and the impact factor of a journal are usually mentioned on its website. High quality journals often have a low acceptance rate and long turnaround time. However, this should not discourage students from approaching them. Authors should ensure compliance of their articles with the journal's '*Instructions to Authors*' and scan their manuscripts for any plagiarism before making the final submission to prevent further delays in the process.

While students often find it difficult to publish their work in medical journals of repute, initiatives like Student IJMR launched by the Indian Journal of Medical Research which specifically solicit research submissions from undergraduate medical students have given them some hope in this regard [3]. All these submissions undergo a thorough peer review. If such manuscripts are accepted by other

journals too, where the process is fine tuned according to the needs of medical students, it would go a long way in helping them publish their articles in eminent journals, without fear of competition by other large scale multi-centric studies or trials. Another common impediment faced by students is the high publication fee charged by a few journals which they are often unable to afford. Before dismissing such journals due to lack of funds, students should contact the editorial team seeking a waiver for the same. Concessions given for submissions of undergraduate students would definitely help and motivate young researchers in approaching standard journals for publishing their work. Additionally, the institute may completely or partly reimburse the publication fees for articles authored by its students so as to promote undergraduate research.

Another quite popular option for students is to opt for Medical Student Journals (MSJs). They are entirely student-led periodicals that publish student-authored articles. The MSJs have characteristically been known to employ a student-friendly and feeble peer review process and they also have a quick response time which incentivises many student authors to send their articles to these journals for publication [4]. However, their opaque peer-review process, lack of MEDLINE® indexing, absence of official journal impact factor data and low article visibility and exposure to the scientific community are other factors which must be considered while approaching student-run publications [5].

Students are important stakeholders in the medical community and hence, their feedback plays an important role in improving medical education and furthering the profession at large. Inputs from the young ignited minds can reveal new dimensions and offer a fresh perspective about the issues which plague the medical profession. Thus, it's imperative that the scientific community gives medical students an appropriate platform for the same. Quite a few medical journals also accept reviews of books, films and other media within the scope of the subject matter of the journal. Original poems and stories related to the medical experience, whether from the point of view of a healthcare worker or patients, or simply an observer, are also solicited by many medical journals. Following are a few non scientific avenues for medical students to commence their journey in the world of literature:

- **Students@nmji [6]:** Opinion articles, experience as an undergraduate medical student, interviews with eminent personalities, critical analyses of diseases in popular culture and letters to the editor. The manuscripts we received covered a wide array of topics, ranging from the importance of quizzes in improving medical education to substance use.

- **Student's corner [7]:** Short narratives of real life experiences in the medical field during student life or residency with a clear informative, educative, or enlightening message.
- **Creative space and student's corner [8]:** Commentaries, discussions, reflections, short stories and poems by students of any discipline on topics on themes linked with the journal's core areas of interest-bioethics, healthcare ethics and humanities.
- **Experiences [9]:** Noteworthy experiences of medical students in the areas of academic, social outreach, student exchanges, research and others.
- **A piece of my mind [10]:** Personal vignettes (e.g., exploring the dynamics of the patient-physician relationship) taken from wide-ranging experiences in medicine; occasional pieces express views and opinions on the myriad issues that affect the healthcare profession.
- **Life [11]:** Feature that looks at a topical or controversial issue in studying or practising medicine from multiple angles and explains what students need to know, or explains how to make the most of a clinical placement or another part of medical school. Authors should interview and quote key people involved, such as first hand witnesses or experts from organisations linked to the topic. Life articles should have a practical takeaway where possible.
- **Student's corner [12]:** Short essays and viewpoints by students and trainees in the health professions on all aspects of medical education, but in particular suggestions on how to improve medical education, and suggestions for new technologies, applications and approaches.
- **Speaking for myself [6]:** A personal viewpoint on any aspect of healthcare in India. This provides a forum for airing individual views on different facets of debatable and topical subjects in healthcare.
- **Opinion [11]:** Articles focusing on a single strong, novel, and well argued point. They are often topical, insightful, and attention grabbing. Make sure that what you write is fair and based on verifiable facts.
- **Looking back [7]:** Historical account of a stream of medicine or an institution or department that has made significant contribution to medicine, medical education, medical research or bio-ethics.
- **The arts and medicine [10]:** Essays that demonstrate the relevance of the arts to the science and practice of medicine.

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