

Editorial

“Please help me, I am in great despair”

Srijit Das

Associate Editor, JSA

The cry “Please help me, I am in great despair” is usually heard when a person is marooned in a desolate island or in a situation which spells ultimate doom for him or her. Have we heard a similar cry from an individual in the field of research? How many of you have across such a situation? The cry may not be audible in the public but it can be easily interpreted by another matured individual who understands and feels this situation better.

In the era of competitive research and quest for publications, everyone is in the race for publication of manuscripts. It is a daunting task for an individual to publish in high impact factor and indexed journals. Many of the editors of international journals simply reject an article without any review comments even after having kept the authors waiting for several months. Some editors cite the reason of too many submissions and lack of space not permitting them to welcome submissions. Few editors even cite the reason that the article does not fit into the scope of the particular journal. Comments are also given on the poor quality of English language and the serious grammatical errors. Bias and unethical behaviour of the process of review have been reported (1). Few manuscripts are even rejected after the revision stage. At all occasions, it is the author who tries in vain and he or she is always at the receiving end. Interestingly, there are few authors who have mastered the trick of publication but their help could not be effectively rendered to the masses. Publication has become an edutainment for many authors while it is a nightmare for few.

Publication has now become commercial. New phrases like ‘conflict of interest’ or ‘potential interest’ have been incorporated into any submission. These happened because of the undisclosed link between the reviewers, editors, researchers and manufacturers which was kept hidden and the secret was unearthed once the manuscript was published. There was a genuine effort to publish the work which was funded. Few editors entertained authors from a particular geographical region which resulted in much discontent. Many of the editors queried about the region from where the manuscript was submitted online as if there was particular weighing of the work from that particular region but the facts were on the contrary. Editors need to chip in with the Herculean task of helping young researchers and writers from the developing countries.

During a recent meeting with a renowned editor from the West, I came to know that he provides all possible editorial help to authors, free of charge. There are many editors who do not reject the manuscript straightaway rather they make the authors revise their article and the polished version is accepted at a later stage. I salute these editors who are helping for a noble cause and boosting up the morale of young researchers from various parts of the world. A comment that the ‘acceptance rate for the journal is 5%’ does not make a journal famous, rather it creates a superfluous feeling or fear in the minds of authors.

Over the years, my only aim has been to help the younger generation in their effort to reach the zenith with their research publications. The feeling of ‘*I can surely succeed*’ is important for each individual. The authors need to be convinced that not every journal rejects the manuscripts. The authors should be advised to study the review comments judiciously, incorporate the changes accordingly and resubmit in any other journal, to reap long term benefits. The factor of perseverance and patience is a must in the field of publication. In this field of publication, it is only the untiring and patient individual, who survives. It should be

our honest effort to reach out to every individual who cries for help in publication and I wish everyone does such an act. Whether as an editor or researcher, it is our utmost duty to help others publish without thinking much about ourselves. I think if we help others for a noble cause, even the almighty would bless us. The entire scientific community and the nation would benefit as a result.

I conclude with the famous saying by Issac Asimov *“You must keep sending work out; you must never let a manuscript do nothing but eat its head off in a drawer. You send that work out again and again, while you're working on another one. If you have talent, you will receive some measure of success - but only if you persist”* (2).

Reference:

1. Campanario JM. Consolation for the Scientist: Sometimes it is Hard to Publish Papers that are Later Highly-Cited. *Social Studies of Science* 1993; 23(2):342-362.
2. Website: http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Isaac_Asimov/. Accessed on 26.9.2011.