
Present Status of Scientific Medical Journals

I was glancing at the proceedings of the 3rd National Meeting of Iranian Association of Medical Editors of December 2010, few points took my attention worth mentioning. Of the 173 medical science journals of Iran only 54 are registered in the SCOPUS Database.¹

At this gathering all the talks had been focused on the improvement of the quality and impact factors (IF) which is the score that the scientific articles receive when cited in other publications. It was also interesting to know that the IF was used in some publications since 1955.² I was somehow surprised since the medical articles have been written more than hundred years and even during the Greek and Islamic domination of medical sciences. Why such new standardizations and demands have been imposed on the writers and editors. To understand the aim of such requisites I referred to the following site, www.icmje.org to find out some more details on this matter (Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biological Journals Writing and Editing for Biomedical Journals), which I present here few essential points of the document.

About uniform requirements the idea was originated in 1978 at Vancouver when a small group of editors of medical journals proposed some guidelines about preparing a manuscript for submission to a biomedical journal. This was first published in 1979.³

This small group expanded very soon into a more important and International group called the International Committee for Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) which has its annual meeting every year and improves and adds to their initial proposals. The last reunion of the group took place in 2010.

The ICMJE emphasizes particularly on several key-points: ethical considerations, the role of editors and their freedom, peer review, conflicts of interest, privacy and confidentiality, protection of human subjects and animals in research. They declare particularly that all procedures should be according to the ethical standards of the institutional and national committees and in particular in accordance of the Helsinki Declaration of 1975 which has been revised in 2008.⁴

ICMJE requires that all prospective clinical trials including medical, drug, surgical procedures to be announced, approved and have registration number by the ICMJE or local committees. ICMJE requires that only the methodology of the trial to be declared. However many local committees and U.S. Food & Drug Administration Act of 2007 (FDAAA) require the registration of both the methodology and results. In Iran also the registry for clinical trials was found in December 2008 and started work as a primary registry for clinical trials and in April 2009 joined the International Clinical Trial Registry Platform (ICTRP)¹ and actually all prospective clinical trials in Iran should be registered locally or internationally for their future publication.

ICMJE requires each manuscript to contain abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, references and key-words.

Concerning abstracts the ICMJE recommends that journals publish the trial registration number at the end of abstract.

The ICMJE requires that the references of the articles to be in accordance with the National Library of Medicine as it is already applied in the Iranian Journal of Ophthalmology.

At the end I recommend all our scientific writers, editors and reviewers to put a more profound look at the requirements of ICMJE (www.icmje.org).

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