

How editing improves the quality of manuscripts?

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Editing is a multifaceted task that involves evaluation, correction and modifications in a manuscript to improve its quality. It requires skills and precise methods. Quality of a research manuscript depends on content and its presentation. The latter can be improved by editing to produce a sequentially organized, clearly comprehensible script with uniform format adhering to a standard style. This paper described how editing techniques were employed in Journal of College of Physicians & Surgeons Pakistan to improve the quality of the articles accepted. Revised manuscripts sent for final editing from September 2009- August 2010 were included in retrospect. Those requiring re-revision or rejected at that stage were excluded. Type of editing was noted and described as numbers.

A total of 233 manuscripts were edited including 11 editorials, 108 original articles, 98 case reports, 08 short communications and 08 letters. Title was modified in 197; either shortened or rephrased. Abstract was added in two case reports. Abstract was edited in all articles. Key words were added in 19 articles and 24 case reports. Linguistic editing was required in 214 manuscripts. Grammatical syntax and phraseology errors were corrected in 175 articles. First person direct form of address (I, we) was changed to third person indirect form in 32 articles. Tenses were changed from present to past in 17 articles and from future to the past tense in 01 article. Word count was reduced to the desired in 39 manuscripts. Typographical errors were corrected in 178 manuscripts. Technical language (terms / jargons such as labs, medics) was corrected in 37 articles. Authors' reply was added to the text in two scripts. Study design was corrected in 38 original articles. Selection criteria placement was corrected in 72 original articles. Statistical description corrected in 78 original articles. The data description was edited in 179 articles. The most common error was found with standard deviation and range statements (in 123 articles); followed by p-value statements in 103 articles; associations being described as correlations in 45 articles.

Point- wise format was converted to narrative text in 48 manuscripts- 04 case reports and 44 original articles. Tables were reduced in 84 articles and 01 case report; figures were reduced in 67 articles and 21 case reports. Legends were added to figures in 06 case reports. Citation of figures/ tables was corrected in 108 articles. Study limitations were added to the discussion in 18 articles and study biases were added to 02. Conclusion was rectified in 28 articles. References were edited by the manuscript editor in 158 manuscripts and by the bibliographer in all.

It was concluded that most research articles accepted at JCPSP had linguistic and archival deficiencies even when accepted for publication requiring editorial corrections. Editing improves the presentation and brings a consistency to the format of the articles published in a volume. Both the features are part of quality. Introducing module in medical curriculum for research writing in English may be needed for long term change.